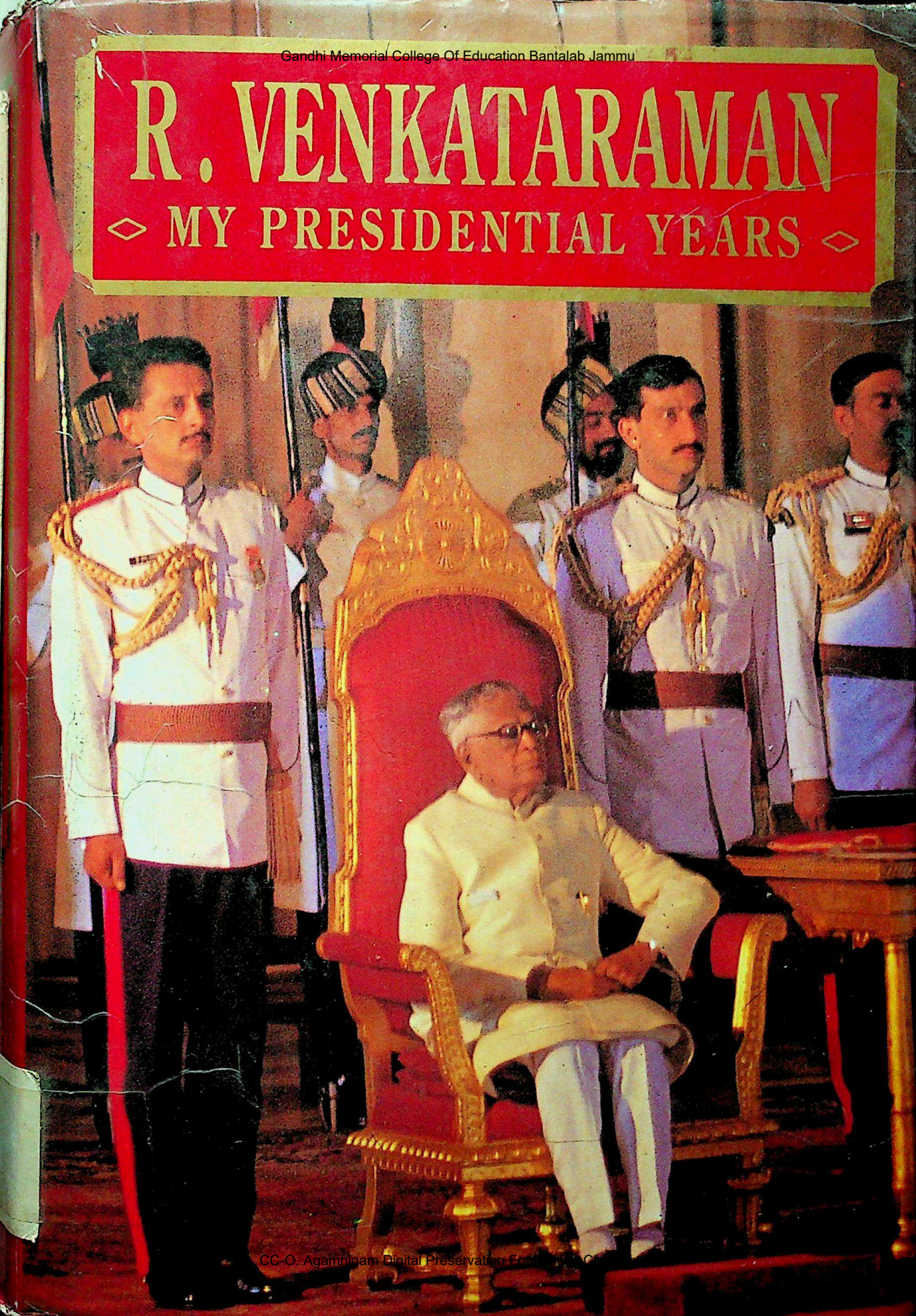
Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

R. VENKATARAMAN

MY PRESIDENTIAL YEARS



CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

MY PRESIDENTIAL YEARS is a first-hand portrayal of events of R. Venkataraman's tenure as the eighth President of India, spanning as it did the politically sensitive years – 1987-1992. Never before has the tenure of an Indian President been so eventful, thorny and challenging. Exposed to the chilling unpredictibility of a political system that so often activates the ogre of dissonance and chaos and threaten to decimate the very institutional edifice, the former President braced himself to act with a sense of purpose. These trying times demanded decisions on a gamut of tricky constitutional and political issues – Sri Lankan crisis, Bofors Gun deal, assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, Stock Scam, or the Defamation Bill. In his inimitable style, the author attempts an in-depth analysis of questions relating to split and disqualification in Parliament, role of Governors, discretionary powers of the President – constitutional issues that have often eluded answers. The detailed account of behind-the-door activities captures the tense moments, minutes before a Bill becomes an Act.

The inherent element of subjectivity reveals the personality of the author and of the personalities he comes across.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation ... igarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

My Presidential Years

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

My Presidential Years

R. Venkataraman

920
VSSM

21(III)

Gandhi Memorial College
SRINAGAR
Acc. No: 2381
Dated: 1994

Reference Book

G.M.C.E.J
2381

INDUS
An imprint of HarperCollins *Publishers* India

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

INDUS
An imprint of HarperCollins *Publishers* India Pvt Ltd
7/16 Ansari Road, New Delhi 110 002

Published 1994 by Indus
Fourth impression 1994

Copyright © R Venkataraman 1994

R Venkataraman asserts the moral right
to be identified as the author of this work

ISBN 81-7223-155-5

Book jacket & picture layout by Arrt Creations, New Delhi
Book jacket photographs by T.S. Ashok, Chief Photographer,
Rashtrapati Bhawan, New Delhi

Typeset in 11 pt Palatino by
Megatechnics
19A Ansari Road
New Delhi 110 002

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publishers.

Printed in India by
Gopsons Papers Pvt Ltd
A-28 Sector IX
Noida 201 301

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Dedicated
to
the sacred memory
of

The Mahaswami Sri Chandrasekarendra Saraswathi
Jagadguru Sankaracharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Contents

Prologue

I

1987–1988

Prelude to the Presidency • I Enter Rashtrapati Bhavan • At Rashtrapati Bhavan • My Presidential Style • Sri Lanka and Other Matters • The Governors' Conference • Administrative Affairs—I • Administrative Affairs—II • My First New Year as President • On Punjab • Investitures, Functions and Visits • Visit to the Soviet Union • The Defamation Bill • State Visit to Four Nations in Europe • Nathdwara Temple Entry • Visit to Bhutan • Kehar Singh's Case

1 – 254

II

1989

• Emperor Hirohito's Funeral • The Prosecution Controversy • Visit to West Germany • Ninth General Elections • The Ninth Lok Sabha

255 – 342

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

III
1990

• *Visit to Portugal* • *Visit to U.K.*
• *Resentment Against Jagmohan* • *Cabinet Crisis*
• *Anti-Mandal Agitation* • *Punjab Elections*
• *Karnataka Governor Crisis* • *Political Crisis*
• *Swearing in of Chandra Shekhar*
• *Split and Disqualification in Parliament*

343 – 460

IV
1991–1992

• *Chandra Shekhar's Tenure as PM*
• *Chandra Shekhar's Resignation*
• *Visit to Southeast Asian Countries*
• *Rajiv Gandhi's Assassination*
• *Developments after Rajiv Gandhi's Death*
• *Tenth Lok Sabha* • *The Cauvery River Waters Dispute*
• *Rashtrapati Bhavan Estate* • *Li Peng's Visit*
• *Retirement Decision* • *Visit to China*
• *Last Days in Rashtrapati Bhavan*

461 – 652

Epilogue

653

Index

655

List of illustrations

(ix)

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

List of Illustrations

Between pages 96 and 97

President Zail Singh and President-elect Venkataraman proceeding to the swearing-in ceremony.

Former Chief Justice Pathak and former President Zail Singh congratulating President Venkataraman.

President congratulating Narasimha Rao on his election as Leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party.

With Rajiv Gandhi.

Sonia Gandhi receiving the Bharat Ratna Award to Rajiv Gandhi.

Swearing in Chandra Shekhar as Prime Minister.

Proceeding to the Joint Session of Parliament (21.12.91).

At the Republic Day Parade with the Chief Guest, President of Portugal (26.1.92).

With Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit.

Between pages 160 and 161

Unveiling Indira Gandhi's portrait.

Governors' Conference (29.10.87).

Rajiv Gandhi handing over his resignation to the President (29.11.89).

Swearing in V.P. Singh as Prime Minister (2.12.89).

Swearing in P.V. Narasimha Rao as Prime Minister (21.6.91).

Padma Vibushan Award to Atal Behari Vajpayee.

Speaker Shivraj Patil presenting the farewell momento.

With the late Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran.

With Jayalalitha, Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu.

With J.R.D. Tata.

With Morarji Desai.

Garlanding the statue of Kamaraj.

Paying tributes to Babu Jagjivan Ram - *Anjali* (1989).

With Mother Teresa.

Between pages 272 and 273

With Prime Minister Khaleda Zia of Bangladesh.

Talking to Emperor Akihito of Japan.

Ceremonial welcome by the President of Finland at Helsinki (14.9.88).

Receiving His Majesty the King of Nepal.

With President Mugabe of Zimbabwe at Harare (6.6.89).

Ceremonial reception by President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia (8.6.89).

With President Vassilion of Cyprus.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

With Prince of Wales (24.5.91).

Award of Doctorate by Philippines University (30.4.91).

With Julius Nyerere.

With President Weizäecker of Federal Republic of Germany at Mughal Gardens (1.3.91).

With Sam Najouma - President of SWAPO.

With Genscher of the Federal Republic of Germany (19.9.89).

Convocation procession of Sai Institute of Higher Learning (22.11.90).

Celebrating Diwali with orphan children (5.11.91).

With school children in Himachal Pradesh.

With Chinese children – Gao Jianhong and Yan Che Ngy – invited by President for the Republic Day Parade (27.1.92).

Presentation of Trumpet 2 Standard to President Bodyguard.

Between pages 352 and 353

With Pope John Paul II.

The Queen Mother, Prince Philip, Janaki and President Venkataraman and Queen Elizabeth at the State Banquet hosted by Her Majesty.

President and Janaki Venkataraman with Princess Diana.

With Margaret Thatcher, Prime Minister of England.

With Nelson Mandela.

At the coronation of the Emperor of Japan.

At Moscow Airport with President Gromykov.

Ceremonial reception by the Queen of Netherlands.

With U.S. President George Bush.

President Gorbachev receiving the Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace and Disarmament.

With Chinese Premier Li Peng.

With Hosni Mubarak.

With Yasser Arafat of PLO.

Ceremonial reception at Beijing by President of China.

State Banquet at Bhutan (1988)

On the Great Wall of China.

Between pages 608 and 609

Vaishno Devi Shrine - Jammu, (Jammu & Kashmir).

Feeding a fawn.

At a prayer ceremony.

Safari in Jim Corbett Park.

At the Bird Island in Seychelles.

A family photograph.

Posing for a photograph in the Rashtrapati Bhavan lawns.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

PROLOGUE

This volume does not purport to be the contemporary history of the nation during my term as President of India, (1987-1992). It deals only with matters with which I had been connected in one form or another. There were several issues of national importance in which the President of India was not involved and they do not find a place in these pages.

The views expressed in this volume reflect the contemporary thinking on matters at the time they arose or occurred. I had kept copious notes of events with dates as they occurred and I have not interpolated my subsequent views into the earlier record. It is therefore possible that some contradictions may have crept in. It is human nature to project oneself appropriately when one writes about himself. I have endeavoured in the following pages merely to explain the reasons for certain acts and omissions on my part and have left it to the reader to form his conclusions.

I have added a glimpse of the routine and ceremonies of Rashtrapati Bhavan purely as information for the people. The nation has no idea of these things nor has predecessors of mine given an account of it in their writings.

Excerpts from my speeches on various occasions may make tiresome reading and may be skipped without much loss. They have been included only to let the country know my views on several matters of national concern.

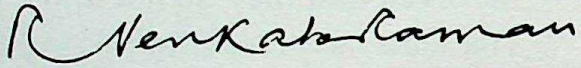
I acknowledge my deep debt of gratitude to Dr. K. Venkatasubramanian, former Vice Chancellor, Pondicherry University, for assisting me in gathering references, arranging all the scriptory work including careful scrutiny of manuscripts and typed material, Sri Gopal Krishna Gandhi, my erstwhile Joint Secretary in the office of the President, for

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

reading through the manuscript and checking relevant facts and dates, Sri K. Narayanan of *Frontline* for editing the manuscript to go to print and Sri K.S. Padmanabhan of Affiliated East West Press for arranging the entire work connected with this publication and to Sri R.K. Mehra of Rupa & Co. and HarperCollins *Publishers* India for bringing out this elegant publication in time.

Madras
1 July, 1994



CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

1

With the insight of age, I can now look back on my presidential years as a time when the ideals of Lord Krishna, taught upon the field of battle, were tested: "Indifference to pleasure and pain, to gain and loss, to conquest and defeat, thus make ready for the fight.... As do the foolish, attached to works, so should the wise do, but without attachment, seeking to establish order in the world."

From Rajamadam village to Rashtrapati Bhavan in Delhi is a long journey. I began at the grassroots level, and later became a trade union lawyer, all of which helped me rise to the position of a trade union leader. In my early youth I courted imprisonment during the Quit India movement, served the Congress organization first as an ordinary worker, and later, as an office-bearer, before entering Parliament. I reached the top by climbing every rung of the ladder.

My active participation in parliamentary proceedings attracted the attention of the then Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. For nearly a decade he assigned me the cherished privilege of representing India as a delegate to the United Nations General Assembly. The next step for me was to be appointed Industries Minister under the illustrious Kamaraj, and successively to the offices of Member of the Union Planning Commission, Union Finance Minister, Union Defence Minister and Vice-President of India. In this volume I propose to confine myself exclusively to the period of my Presidential years, from 1987 to 1992, since the events during

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

this period were both unique and unprecedented.

I was President of India for five eventful years and dealt with four Prime Ministers: Rajiv Gandhi, V.P. Singh, Chandra Shekhar and P.V.Narasimha Rao — appointing the last three within the space of two years. I also had to make momentous decisions involving significant constitutional implications. The contentious and controversial issues of Sri Lanka, Bofors, Punjab and Tamil Nadu, to name only a few, fell to my lot. I hope these memoirs of my presidential years illuminate the workings of Indian democracy under our parliamentary system. I also hope they shed some light on the major events and personalities I encountered. I have maintained notes of these years and have dipped into the records of my meetings with Prime Ministers, other political leaders and a host of national and international celebrities from all walks of life.

I had just returned from an official trip to Botswana in my capacity as Vice-President of India, about one year before President Zail Singh's term was scheduled to end. That was when I first received a hint from Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi that he intended nominating me as the Congress party's candidate for the high office of the President of India. I was informed at Delhi's Indira Gandhi international airport that there had been an abortive assassination attempt on Rajiv Gandhi at Rajghat. Ironically, he was fired at while he was offering prayers to the apostle of non-violence, Mahatma Gandhi. Fortunately he did not get hurt. But my private secretary, Ramanathan, and my granddaughter Shoba (who were present on the occasion) received minor injuries. I immediately conveyed my enormous sense of relief at Rajiv Gandhi's providential escape; I did not bother to tell him about my secretary and my granddaughter. However, the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Prime Minister somehow did get to know, and called on me on October 4, 1986, to express his concern, and he also brought flowers for Shoba. When we were alone, he told me that he intended proposing my name for the Presidency. Apparently, way back in 1982, it had almost been decided to propose my name, but this was changed at the last minute. I conveyed to the Prime Minister my thanks and gratitude about the decision. Later, his political secretary, M.L. Fotedar, called on me and reiterated what the Prime Minister had already said, adding that it should remain confidential until the final decision by the Congress Parliamentary Board was announced.

This did not prevent Press speculation and the *Hindustan Times* described me as a "worthy successor to Dr. Radhakrishnan," adding that "though Dr Radhakrishnan was a towering scholar while Venkataraman started out as a labour lawyer, both had the common traits of dignity and fairplay".

The last few months of President Zail Singh's tenure were plagued by tension, bitterness and controversy. I have not been able to find out the exact cause of the estrangement between Zail Singh and Rajiv Gandhi. The publicly stated reasons for the discord are well-known — that the Prime Minister did not call on the President regularly to brief him, that the Prime Minister ignored and slighted the President, and also that the Prime Minister did not clear the President's state visits abroad. Some say that the President was peeved by the non-approval of the extension of service to a Joint Secretary to the President. It was also said that the Home Ministry did not furnish him with a copy of the Thakkar Commission Report on the assassination of Indira Gandhi, in spite of repeated requests. It was felt that the Prime Minister had violated Article 78 of the Constitution, which states that

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

the Prime Minister must furnish information relating to the administration of the affairs of the Union and proposals for legislation as and when the President may call for it. The simmering estrangement came to the surface when the Prime Minister, replying to a Press query about his non-observance of the convention of meeting and briefing the President, somewhat casually said, "I have departed from convention in hundreds of things."

But the crisis really surfaced when the Prime Minister stated in Parliament that he was regularly meeting the President and briefing him on all important issues. However, the *Indian Express* (March 13, 1987) published a letter claiming to have been issued by the President challenging the Prime Minister's statement. This was raised in the Rajya Sabha and, as Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, I had to decide whether the correspondence between the Head of State and the Head of Government could be raised and discussed in Parliament.

I ruled out any discussion on the subject, upholding the principle of confidentiality of communication between the President and the Prime Minister. This took place on March 20, 1987, and is a significant constitutional precedent.

Then started the process of consulting opposition parties on the choice of the next President. Eminent public figures — V.R. Krishna Iyer (the former Supreme Court judge) and film director Satyajit Ray — were mentioned by the Communist parties. Fotedar told me it would be advantageous to float a few names, and though he mentioned several he finally thought of P.V. Narasimha Rao (then a Union Minister), former Minister and MP Maragatham Chandrasekhar, and Union Minister B. Shankaranand. The next day's newspapers mentioned these names along with those of Mohammed Yunus of the Trade Fair Authority of India, and Air Chief Marshal (retd.) I.H. Latif — India's Ambassador in

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

France. It was also reported that some Congressmen were not convinced that I could be trusted to stand by the party and the Prime Minister at all times. Others felt that due to my "old age, ill health and poor vision", the Prime Minister was considering alternative candidates. Since such speculation is so much a feature of Indian politics I remained indifferent — at best amused — at such reports.

Meanwhile, Rajiv Gandhi's problems began to intensify. The Indian Ambassador in Bonn sent a message saying that the German firm HDW, suppliers of SSK submarines, had quoted a higher price for two extra submarines as they claimed they had to pay a 7 per cent commission to "Indian contacts". Then, Swedish Radio, a private organisation, reported that the Swedish firm, Bofors, had paid commissions to Indian politicians and bureaucrats on the sale of 155 mm Howitzer guns to India.

As for Zail Singh, he had started making his "farewell visits" to the States. He went to Karnataka and Andhra once too often. The Karnataka Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde, and the Andhra Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao gave the impression that Zail Singh would find support for a second term as President.

The opposition were quick to seize upon this President–Prime Minister discord and the mounting charges of corruption in high places over defence deals, and actually presented a petition to Zail Singh for sanction to prosecute the Prime Minister under the Prevention of Corruption Act.

The air was thick with rumours that the President might dismiss the Prime Minister and appoint another in his place. So much so that on June 8, 1987, a senior Congress MP (opposed to Rajiv Gandhi) called on me. He said that the Haryana elections would go against the Congress, and that the President would call on the Prime Minister to step down from office in view of several charges of corruption. He

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

added that if the Prime Minister did not agree then the President would dismiss him and appoint another Prime Minister. Moreover, the new Prime Minister could in turn advise the dissolution of Parliament. Then came the *pièce de résistance.* All the dissidents thought, so he told me, that the President's action would carry conviction if I agreed to be named the Prime Minister!

His statement left me stunned beyond words. Recovering my poise I tried explaining to this MP that the whole scheme was ill-conceived and that the President could not dismiss a Prime Minister as long as he enjoyed the confidence of the Lok Sabha. But the Congress MP went on to reveal that more than two hundred and forty members of the party (whose names he had actually typed out!) were opposed to the Prime Minister and were only waiting for an opportunity to register dissent. He suggested I should speak to a particular legal expert regarding the constitutional position. I reminded him that I knew this expert rather well and that he was an eminent lawyer, but that I was firm in my belief about the limitations of the President's powers regarding dismissal.

The Congress MP, however, was not going to give up, even when I informed him that I had no intention of being involved in any of these machinations. He pointed out that I may not personally care for the office suggested, but that I ought to care for the country. There followed a long pause, and he finally left asking me to meet Zail Singh. I nodded, hoping against hope that the President would not call me.

But he did call me — the very next day in fact, at eleven in the morning, I was told the President was unwell, and was then conducted to his private apartment on the first floor, where I found him dressed informally. I enquired about his health and told him of my recent visit to Switzerland. Without beating about the bush he asked me directly

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

whether the Congress MP had met me. I answered that he had. He waited for me to continue, but I kept quiet, and the silence became oppressive.

President Zail Singh asked me point-blank about my response to the MP's idea. I told him quite categorically that I did not want to be involved, and also that the MP's assessment was totally unrealistic. Then Zail Singh told me that the Congress MP had given him the impression that I would go along with their move. I replied, "You know me very well, Gianiji, I never connive at nor indulge in any underhand activities." I even advised him to keep out of these plans himself, and maintain his dignity. He assured me that he was only "listening" to these dissident activities and not supporting them. Both of us agreed that our conversation should remain completely confidential.

The persistent MP still came and met me. Again I told him that I did not want any involvement in such nefarious moves. However, he insisted that I should meet the constitutional expert. But I rang him up later that day and firmly told him that I had no intention of meeting the legal expert. That seems to have finally convinced him, because he no longer came to visit me.

I have always felt an affinity with Shakespeare's memorable lines in *Hamlet*: "This above all, to thine own self be true,/ And it must follow as the night to the day,/ Thou canst not then be false to any man."

On June 13, one of the leaders of the opposition groups said he wanted to meet me urgently. When he came he said that the President was prepared to dismiss Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and immediately appoint another person as Prime Minister, and it was the unanimous wish of the opposition groups as well as of a large chunk of the Congress Party that

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

I should agree to be nominated the Prime Minister. I did not at all wish to discuss the subject, so I searched frantically for a way out. It then struck me that I could end the discussion in one way. I simply told him that I had been offered the Congress Party's nomination for the Presidency and that I had accepted it. Though this was not true then, it did the trick. The opposition leader left saying, "I am glad that the Congress has done at least one right thing in the last several months. I understand your position."

The very next morning, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, accompanied by Kamalapati Tripathi and a couple of others, called on me to formally convey the decision of the Congress Parliamentary Board to nominate me as the party's candidate for the Presidency. I thanked them and said I felt greatly honoured by the confidence which the Congress Party had reposed in me. Then Kamalapati Tripathi quipped, "I hope you will not dismiss the Prime Minister." I replied, "I will not dismiss the Constitution."

Later, when asked by reporters as to when I would launch my election campaign, I reminded them that Presidents such as Rajendra Prasad, Radhakrishnan and Zakir Husain did not campaign at all. The Indian Press generally welcomed the choice and in view of the absolute majority which the Congress enjoyed in the electoral college, some commented: "Venkat is as good as elected."

June 15, 1987, was the day when several nomination papers, signed by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, P.V. Narasimha Rao, some Chief Ministers and prominent Congress party leaders, were brought to me for acceptance. It turned out to be something of a gala event. More than one hundred and fifty MPs had gathered at the office of the Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, wanting me to sign my nomination papers. With cameras clicking, lights flashing, video cameras whirring and TV crews present, the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

nomination was filed around 2 p.m. that day.

As predicted by the Opposition, the Congress was routed in the Haryana elections, securing a miserable five seats as against fifty-eight by Devi Lal's Lok Dal and fifteen by the Bharatiya Janata Party. This resulted in a lot of political activity. Many thought that the "Giri episode" would be repeated. But once Gianiji realised that there were not enough dissident Congress leaders willing to sign his nomination papers, he rejected the idea and assured Rajiv Gandhi that he was not going to be the opposition's candidate for the presidential poll.

Except for the BJP, the opposition groups formally named V.R. Krishna Iyer as their candidate on June 23. This left V.R. Krishna Iyer, Mithilesh Kumar and myself. Though Mithilesh Kumar was from Bihar he was registered in Delhi's electoral rolls. Not much was known about him. During the scrutiny, P. Chidambaram, Minister of State in the Union government, who was also representing me before the Returning Officer, raised doubts about the authenticity of the signatures of the proposers, particularly those of Mithilesh Kumar. I advised him not to press the objection as it was a better strategy to defeat the contestant in a regular election.

However, a complication arose. If a comparatively unknown candidate (Mithilesh Kumar) were to die (due to accident or by some design) before the actual election, then the election would have to be countermanded. Fresh elections could then be held only after a couple of months. Some felt that Zail Singh may continue in office for a short term, act arbitrarily and create chaos. Giani Zail Singh, of course, had no such intention and had already said so to the Prime Minister. Such apprehensions only go to show how interested parties can distort situations and spread disinformation and misunderstanding.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

In the meantime, Mithilesh Kumar was put under a 24-hour vigil by the Home Ministry. I conveyed to Rajiv Gandhi my reluctance to campaign personally. The Prime Minister accepted this and opted for the party taking the necessary steps to mobilise its voting strength. I also made it a point to call on President Zail Singh to thank him for his good wishes on my selection as the official Congress candidate. He was quite cordial and informed me that he could not make immediate arrangements to shift, as no suitable alternative residence had been allotted to him. He also talked about the inadequacy of a retired President's pension. I relayed this to Rajiv Gandhi, who agreed to attend to these matters.

The opposition candidate, V.R. Krishna Iyer, launched a powerful campaign. Soon enough, he started criticising me obliquely, and wanted me to declare my views on the Indian Presidency, saying on one occasion that he was "a little amused" that one of the other candidates (obviously meaning me) was observing "significant silence" on many issues. He also wanted a televised debate between ourselves on the lines of the American presidential debates on TV.

Since I was not campaigning I did not bother to reply. The Press wanted me to clarify my position. I patiently explained that a presidential debate on the pattern of the U.S.A. was not appropriate for a parliamentary democracy, where the President was only a symbolic Head of the State. As for the relationship between the President and the Prime Minister, it was a matter of adjustment and accommodation between the two and no outsider could postulate a rigid rule.

On the afternoon of July 16, the result was announced. I had secured 4,690 votes of the electoral college, of the value of 740,148 votes as against 1,439 votes of the value of 281,550 by Krishna Iyer. Mithilesh Kumar managed seven, of the value of 2,223 votes. The final tally showed that I had 36,000 more and Krishna Iyer 9,000 less votes than expected.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

In the evening, the Prime Minister, Buta Singh, P.V. Narasimha Rao and other Ministers came to felicitate me. What with the enormous number of media persons and other visitors present there was a virtual stampede. I thanked Rajiv Gandhi and the Congress Party members for their smooth and efficient campaign and the striking results achieved. Rajiv Gandhi turned to P.V. Narasimha Rao and his team. I too turned to him and thanked him for all the trouble he had taken. Rao quipped, "We have taken all this trouble to ensure that we are trouble-free for the next five years." A little later I draped Rajiv Gandhi with a traditional silk zari *ponnadai,* which made him look rather grand.

On the eve of my assumption of the high office of the President of my country, the Rajya Sabha members hosted a farewell function for me. I was quite flattered to find that almost all the opposition group leaders along with the Prime Minister, the Deputy Chairman and the Leader of the House were present at the gathering. Rajiv Gandhi delivered a fine speech on the occasion and so did others. In my reply, I used the analogy of a headmaster to describe my role — maintaining discipline and at the same time extending latitude to the beloved students.

The Prime Minister and his Cabinet hosted a farewell dinner for President Zail Singh. The atmosphere at this function was very cordial and whatever discord prevailed earlier was all forgotten. However, I could not help feeling that President Zail Singh was unhappy at Members of Parliament not hosting the customary farewell meeting for him.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

2

The greatest human being to set foot in the vast mansion that is Rashtrapati Bhavan was, in my opinion, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. The first time, I recall, was when he went to see Lord Irwin just two days after the Viceroy's House (as it was then called) had been thrown open to the public. It was this that prompted Winston Churchill's acerbic and now well-known remark, "It is alarming and also nauseating to see Mr. Gandhi now posing as a *fakir* ... striding half-naked up the steps of the Viceregal Palace, while he is still conducting a campaign of civil disobedience, to parley on equal terms with the representative of the King Emperor." Later the King Emperor himself, in a letter to the Viceroy, disapproved of the "religious fanatic with his restricted covering being admitted to your beautiful new house." For all of us caught up in India's freedom struggle, this event is a memory to be proud of. On this special day in my life I remembered Gandhiji endlessly.

Paying homage to Gandhiji, the Father of our Nation, and offering prayers at Rajghat (his *samadhi*) was the first act I undertook on the day of my swearing-in as the President of India on July 25, 1987. Along with my family I observed silence for one minute, sincerely praying for Mahatmaji to pilot me in the awesome and onerous responsibility I was about to undertake. In the visitors' book I remarked, "May

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

the spirit of Gandhiji prevail."

On this auspicious day the Paramacharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham had his benedictions delivered specially for me by a representative of the *Mutt*. For his vast national and international following the Paramacharya, who entered his hundredth year in May 1993, is considered the living embodiment of the virtues of austerity, wisdom, compassion and benevolence. He is regarded as a living divinity, a *jeevan mukta*. His blessings, while lifting my spirits, also made me realise my duty to try and live up to his exalted standards of conduct.

The swearing-in ceremony of a President is a major event in the national history of India. It was conducted with all the resplendence and fanfare required for the occasion. The appointed hour for the swearing-in was 12.15 p.m. and the ceremony was to be held in the Central Hall of Parliament and not in the historic Durbar Hall of Rashtrapati Bhavan, which would have been the venue had Parliament not been in session. This spacious circular Hall with its high dome is said to be one of the most magnificent in the world. Overlooking the dais hangs a portrait of Mahatma Gandhi and also those of other national leaders. Punctiliously planned, well-rehearsed, the swearing-in ceremony is carried out like clockwork. However, I found the rigidity and formality somewhat irksome and trying at times but then I believe, these things must have been done in a proper manner.

Shortly before noon I drove to Rashtrapati Bhavan. Southerner that I am, I was not accustomed to wearing the kind of clothes I had to wear for the occasion but my term as Vice-President of India had made me used to it and I was quite comfortable in the black silk sherwani and narrow white *churidar*. Giani Zail Singh was also dressed in a similar outfit but in impeccable white. The ceremonial procession started from the Durbar Hall with two magnificently attired

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

ADCs walking ahead, President Zail Singh and myself walking side by side, followed by the Military Secretary and his deputy.

The backdrop was provided by the sheer vastness of the domed Bhavan whose majesty, I feel, is derived more from its horizontal spread rather than its vertical height. We slowly descended the red-carpeted, imposing thirty-one steps till we reached the lowermost, which is actually fifty metres wide. The President's Bodyguard flanked the steps in rows on both sides. They stood behind the exquisite flowers in special pots placed there for the occasion. The President and myself walked in measured steps set by the ADCs in front till we reached the forecourt. Then Giani Zail Singh mounted a small red-carpeted dais and faced the President's Bodyguard. The officers facing Zail Singh were all six feet and over. They wore the summer ceremonial uniform which consisted of Prussian blue-and-gold turbans, white long coats with gold girdles, white gloves, white breeches and black Napoleon boots with shining spurs. Their lances, with red-and-white cavalry pennants and swords, glinted in the bright sun. Their fine bay horses, uniform in colour and no less distinctive than their riders, were all above the minimum height of fifteen hands. The prestige of the Bodyguard entitles the horses to wear sheep-and-pantherskin covers, chain, reins, white cords, throat ornaments and white brow bands. It was indeed a wonderful spectacle which I will never forget.

In fact, I am told that architect-designer Lutyens kept the Bodyguard in mind while planning Rashtrapati Bhavan. Their height had been taken into account while planning archways, doors, chandeliers and the like, and their uniforms were part of his overall colour scheme. The horses are maintained at the President's estate under the special care of a commandant, a vet and other maintenance staff. I

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

should add here that the role of the Bodyguard is not merely ceremonial. The officers and men of the Bodyguard are not only excellent horsemen, but outstanding tankmen and paratroopers. And recruitment to this select force involves rigorous physical and psychological tests. They have taken active part in campaigns and participated in the Indian Peace-Keeping Force in Sri Lanka.

To the sound of the bugle President Zail Singh took the salute and I, the President-elect, stood a little behind him on the left. Then we entered the gleaming black six-door limousine and started our journey to Parliament House. We were preceded by a cavalcade of neatly drawn mounted *sawars* of the President's Bodyguard. In earlier years the President proceeded to Parliament or to the Republic Day parade in a six-horse open state coach. But over the last few years for security reasons the President travels in bullet-proof cars even on ceremonial occasions. On our way to Parliament House, Giani Zail Singh commented that the state coach should have been used for this occasion. But I reminded him that such matters were now decided by the security officials.

The ceremonial procession reached Gate No. 5 of Parliament House. The circular edifice which is Parliament House with its impressive colonnade not only inspires unity but has been seen as a symbol of eternity. We were received by the Speaker, the Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha and the Secretaries-General of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha. The President's Bodyguard again stood in line and presented a salute to the President, while I stood a little behind on the left. Then, preceded by the Secretaries-General, the President and I walked abreast of each other and arrived at the entrance of the Central Hall. The usher announced in stentorian tones, *"Mahamahim Rashtrapatiji"*, and all the members assembled in the Hall stood up. I felt a strong

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

sense of history pervading the atmosphere. After all it was in this great hall that India kept its tryst with destiny on the midnight of August 14, 1947. It was also here that the stalwarts of the Indian freedom struggle had debated the articles of the Constitution and finally set their signature to the charter of the Indian people.

I saw that the Prime Minister, his Council of Ministers, Governors, the diplomatic corps, leaders of political parties and MPs were all seated in front of me in the hall. On the left was my family and the family of the outgoing President. I had the uncanny feeling that Gandhiji seemed to be looking at us benevolently from his portrait on the wall. On the dais with us were the then Chief Justice of India, R.S. Pathak, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha and the Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha. The national anthem was played and then the Home Secretary came forward and sought permission of the outgoing President to start the proceedings. He then read out the Election Commission's notification declaring Ramaswami Venkataraman the duly elected President of India.

At the stroke of fifteen minutes past twelve, the auspicious time for the administration of the oath of office (Article 60), the full text of the oath was read out by the Chief Justice. As the oath was being administered Giani Zail Singh moved to my chair and after taking the oath I occupied his. The thunderous applause from the august gathering lasted several minutes.

In my acceptance speech I paid homage to India's great departed leaders and stated that I would neither fail to exercise the duties and functions attached to this high office nor stray beyond the powers enshrined in the Constitution by the founding fathers. Several ovations punctuated my speech when I said that I would endeavour to persevere in the high tradition of Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Dr. Radhakrishnan and Dr. Zakir Husain. I quoted the great Tamil

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

poet, Subramania Bharati, who said, "The plant of freedom was reared not with water but with tears," and I also quoted the renowned Hindi poet, Maithilisharan Gupt, "May every heart with sympathy burn to seek each other's affection." I concluded my address quoting Gandhiji's prayer, "*Sabko sanmati de Bhagavan*". Pratibha Patil, Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, read out the Hindi version of my speech with great effect.

The Home Secretary then came forward, bowed and sought permission of the new President to conclude the ceremony. I gave my assent. The national anthem was played and the ceremonial procession left for Gate No. 5 of Parliament House. This time the President's Bodyguard presented the salute to me as the new President, with the ex-President standing a little behind me to the left. After taking leave of the Prime Minister and officers of Parliament we again boarded the black bullet-proof limousine and started our journey back to Rashtrapati Bhavan. I felt quite overwhelmed at the great honour bestowed on me in the shape of the Presidency of India.

Back in Rashtrapati Bhavan I was conducted to the study while Giani Zail Singh retired to his room. The Secretary to the President, Mr. Varadan, (IAS), then presented the register and the oath for signature, completing the formalities of taking over the office of the President of India. The elegant horse-drawn buggy was brought and I proceeded in it to the forecourt for taking salute of the Inter-Services Guard of Honour. Men from the three Services (the Army, the Navy and Air Force) were stationed in their splendid uniforms against the imposing facade of Rashtrapati Bhavan. Here too, the national anthem was played and the parade commander invited me to inspect the Guard of Honour which I did to the accompaniment of tunes played by the Services band. After the ceremony I mingled with the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Prime Minister and other dignitaries in attendance.

The former President arrived in a car and was received by the Defence Minister and the three Service Chiefs. Giani Zail Singh then took the salute and inspected the Inter-Services parade presented as a farewell to the outgoing President.

Now came the time to bid adieu to the former President. Usually the President and senior members of government see him off at the airport or the railway station. However, Giani Zail Singh was going to stay in Delhi. As a special gesture, my wife and I drove with him and his daughter to their new home — No. 4, Circular Road, New Delhi. This gesture was appreciated by all, particularly so by Gianiji who took my hands in his as we were driving along and said, "You have been very kind in your address and now in taking me to my house."

There had been some delay in the selection of a suitable residence for Giani Zail Singh and so his personal effects were removed from Rashtrapati Bhavan only a day before I assumed office. Since the family's using of Rashtrapati Bhavan required extensive cleaning and maintenance I decided to move into the guest wing apartments and my family stayed on temporarily at the Vice-President's residence.

In the afternoon the Prime Minister along with his wife paid a courtesy call and we exchanged pleasantries. A little later I met the Council of Ministers and spent a relaxed and informal half-hour with them. They left after tea and the official photography session, promising to visit often.

At six in the evening, the Chiefs of Staff of the three Services paid a ceremonial call on me for I was now the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces under the Constitution. They were happy that for the first time a former Defence Minister had become the Supreme Commander. I

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

too knew them very well and we had a very pleasant meeting.

Later, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi asked me whether M.L. Fotedar, his political secretary, could be sworn in as Cabinet Minister the same day. I replied in the affirmative since the Prime Minister desired it. He had not been able to do so earlier, as he had wished, due to the political turmoil of the preceding few months. So I fixed up the swearing-in ceremony of Fotedar as Cabinet Minister at 7.30 p.m. the same day. It was a very brief ceremony without the usual fanfare attached to such functions, with not many people attending it due to the very short notice.

Thus ended the most hectic and significant day of my life. I had reached the pinnacle of my political career. I had not aspired to, longed for or canvassed for any office that I had held. Each one of the transitions — from the Ministry of Finance to Defence, from Defence to the Vice-Presidency, and from there to the Presidency — had come to me naturally without my particularly seeking them. Now there was no higher office to which I could aspire. All I wanted was to serve the country honestly, diligently and effectively. When C. Rajagopalachari laid down office as the last Governor-General of India, Pandit Nehru said of him that he was a man who looked upon a palace as a cottage and a cottage as a palace. I was determined to emulate his example and remain my essential modest self, not overawed by the pomp and panoply of residence in Rashtrapati Bhavan.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

3

Few heads of state anywhere in the world live in such imposing splendour as the President of India does in Rashtrapati Bhavan. Moreover, as the house of the President of India it symbolises the authority of the world's largest democracy. But Rashtrapati Bhavan has also become something of a historical paradox. It was built to announce that the British had arrived in India, and intended to stay. But as we know, the British Raj ended in 1947 and it became the new democracy's Presidential lodging. The building designed by Edwin Landseer Lutyens as an act of homage to his King was destined to prove the truth of Northcote Parkinson's observation that "perfection of planned layout is achieved only by institutions on the point of collapse."

After the hectic events from daybreak to midnight of July 25, the day I was sworn in, I slept soundly in the Presidential suite in Rashtrapati Bhavan. I woke up the next morning at 6.30 which is half an hour later than my usual hour. For a split second I did not know where I was as the surroundings were not the familiar ones I was used to as Vice-President in the *Upa Rashtrapati Nivas*.

Suddenly I realised the sheer majesty of Rashtrapati Bhavan, its massive structure, extraordinarily high ceilings and long winding corridors. I seemed to have shrunk in size, my comparatively dimunitive form quite lost amidst such vastness.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

I looked out of the ornate window and saw a panoramic vista of superbly trimmed trees and lush verdant lawns though it was the height of summer in Delhi. I came to know later that there are more than six hundred varieties of trees including mango, neem, jamun, peepal and banyan with their accompanying bird life, from peacocks to the humble sparrow. I felt like walking down to the pink sandstone pergola in the garden. I also looked forward to walking in the famed Mughal Gardens with their enormous variety of roses, more than two hundred and fifty types, including the Benkinsian, believed to be the parent of all the strains. The garden also grows more than sixty of the hundred and one known kinds of bougainvillaea.

I could not linger, however, because there was a stream of visitors already waiting to make their courtesy call on me, this being the first day of my tenure as President. I was to meet them in groups in the Yellow Drawing Room. My first full day, July 26, 1987, as the President of the Republic of India had begun.

The Yellow Drawing Room (the name is retained from British days) is located on the ground floor between the study on one side and the Grey Dining Room on the other. This room is used whenever lunches are hosted by the President to dignitaries other than heads of state. Here invitees are formally introduced to the visiting dignitaries and thereafter they mix with the members of the visiting delegation and are served soft drinks. Then they adjourn for lunch in the Grey Dining Room, which can accommodate about sixty persons. I also used this room to meet the general public who came in groups on an appointed day every week.

I met Chief Ministers and other dignitaries in the Study. This is an elegant room lined with shelves containing beautifully bound books on literature, philosophy and art. This was the room used by Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Dr. Zakir

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Husain, V.V. Giri and other Presidents before me. I had this room refurnished with leather sofas, rearranged the seating and gave it a much-needed facelift. In the left-hand corner of this study there is a large table with a high-backed chair. It is the official seat of the President.

Dr. Radhakrishnan had a different practice. He mostly lay reclining in bed reading, surrounded by a dozen books in his room on the first floor. All informal meetings with his friends and associates took place in this room, where he had placed a small chair for visitors. I had met him several times in this very room. Once I asked Dr. Radhakrishnan why he kept a dozen books around him instead of having books brought to him when he wanted. He said that he took up a book, read a few pages and if he found that he was already familiar with the ideas contained in it, he would put it aside and pick up another to avoid boredom. This was in contrast to many people who would say that they liked books because they reflected their own views.

The first thing that struck me on that day, incidentally, was that there was no separate room which could function as an office for the President. Earlier Presidents used to sign papers brought to their apartment by the staff. Now, since my younger days I have been accustomed to a separate office room where I could concentrate on my work. So I told my secretary Varadan that an office should be prepared for me on the ground floor, with shelves for keeping all the reference books. I also informed him that I would regularly come to this office at 10 a.m. and stay on till half past one and that in the afternoon I would return to the office at four and continue as long as it was necessary. I also outlined the procedure for dealing with files, and matters relating to the Rashtrapati Bhavan administration. I organised a daily meeting of the Military Secretary, the Secretary to the President, the Joint Secretary and the Press Secretary (when necessary) at

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

10.15 a.m. It took a few weeks, however, to get these things going.

In the evening Rajiv Gandhi and his wife Sonia with their children Rahul and Priyanka came over for a family get-together. On our side my wife, my daughters Padma and Lakshmi and son-in-law K. Venkataraman, my grand-children Siddharth and Shoba were present. It was a very pleasant and joyous occasion full of laughter, jokes and friendly witticisms.

After tea, the families retired to the next room and Rajiv Gandhi and I conferred. He outlined the latest situation in Sri Lanka. He said that while the Jaffna area, that is the north of Sri Lanka, had a predominantly Tamil population, the Eastern province did not have a majority of Tamils. Nevertheless all the ethnic Tamil groups in Sri Lanka were insisting on a merger of the Northern and Eastern provinces. The Sri Lankan Government's position was that it would form two separate entities of the Northern and Eastern provinces and would merge these two areas if the Eastern province expressed its wish democratically either through a referendum or through elected representatives. This, Rajiv Gandhi explained, was unacceptable to the Tamil groups and he was trying to persuade the Sri Lankan authorities to merge these two areas in the first instance and allow the people of the Eastern region to opt out of the merger by a democratic process. He was basically suggesting the delinking of the Eastern province through the exercise of choice by a democratic process. I told him that from what I had learnt from the Sri Lankan Ministers, he would find it very difficult to convince the Sri Lankan side.

On the demand for a Joint Parliamentary Committee to investigate the alleged pay-offs in connection with the Bofors gun deal, I advised him that he could accept the request and move for the appointment of a committee, with a limited

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

membership of about 15 members from both the Houses. Rajiv said that the Opposition wanted 21 members and I told him to explain to them the advantages of a smaller committee which would be more effective for investigation, but if they insisted on a larger number he need not resist.

We then discussed the measures to be taken by both of us to prevent leakage of confidential information. I proposed that confidential communications should be sent in a locked box with each of us having a key, so that it could by opened only by the President and the Prime Minister. He readily agreed with this suggestion and the very next day he sent me a red box with one key for me. This system ensured that no confidential communication between the President and Prime Minister leaked out during the entire five years of my tenure as President.

The next day I went to visit the family apartments for the first time. These are located in the north wing of Rashtrapati Bhavan while guest apartments are in the south wing. In between these two wings are located the Ashoka Hall where receptions are held and the Durbar Hall, where ceremonies connected with civil and military awards are conducted, banquet room, conference hall and many others. I had imagined that the family apartments would be like some of the elegant Western guest houses where I had stayed as a state guest. To my astonishment I found that the living apartments were totally non-functional, having been built at a time when there was no water-borne sanitation. Toilets were adjacent but not attached to the bedrooms. Besides, a great deal of work was required to tidy up the place. Hordes of workmen removing carpets for cleaning, painting the walls and repairing minor faults had made a mess of the place. My granddaughter who was accompanying me suggested humorously that I ought to resign from the Presidency and go back to Maulana Azad Road (*Upa*

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Rashtrapati Nivas), which is one of the most comfortable houses in Delhi.

I made it clear that no structural alterations should be made and that we would live in the building as it was. For witnessing the ceremony of my assuming office, all my children came to attend, but the number of family members who stayed on with me were only three — my wife and two granddaughters. Three years later one of my daughters living abroad joined me, and stayed occasionally for two or three months at a time. So we concentrated our attention on the few rooms which had to be done up immediately.

The President's staff consists of two sections, the permanent staff attached to the office of the President and the personal staff whose tenure is coterminous with the office. I allowed the tenure of all the previous President's personal staff which were coterminous with the office to lapse and did not renew any of them. I could not even accommodate Giani Zail Singh's suggestion to retain one officer as I was advised against it.

I brought with me from the Vice-President's office the Secretary to the Vice-President, Gopal Gandhi, (IAS), Bhatnagar, the Information Officer, Ramanathan, my Private Secretary, and a few stenographers and personal assistants. As a result of the reduction of staff I was told that there was a net saving of Rs. 15,000 per mensem.

In the Vice-President's residence, my bedroom was on the ground floor and I used to take my morning walk in the garden. I used to feed the birds with puffed rice every morning. It was a pleasure to watch the birds avidly devouring the entire offering. Sometimes when I was a little late the sparrows and pigeons would come to the door through which I usually came out, anxiously waiting for me.

Since my bedroom in Rashtrapati Bhavan was on the first floor I found it difficult to come down in the morning and so

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

I shifted the time of my daily walk to the evening. When I took my first walk in the Mughal Gardens, quite an army of people came along with me, much to my horror and disgust. The security officer, ADCs, a number of peons, totalling over a dozen surrounded me. I wanted to have a solitary, quiet walk and I did not like officers at my heels and security men breathing over my shoulder. I told them politely that they need not accompany me and that within the Mughal Gardens I should be quite safe. But the ADC insisted that the staff that was accompanying the President was minimal and that it was obligatory on their part to follow the President!

So, I realised then that the first sacrifice that one makes as President is privacy. From the time one gets up in the morning until one retires several permutations and combinations of security men, ADCs and peons are always keeping a watchful eye on the President's every movement, constantly staring at him, appearing to be very alert.

Since childhood I was used to arranging my own clothes, cleaning and polishing my shoes and attending to all my personal chores myself. Even after becoming a Minister in Madras I did not have a valet. When I went on camp I used to pack and unpack my clothes myself. The peon who accompanied me used to run errands, bring my coffee, etc. But basically, I was completely self-reliant about my personal needs. Now I found as President that my staff refused to allow me to do anything myself. I was afraid that if this continued for five years my limbs would become stiff and rigid. Atrophy would naturally set in. And so I tried, almost furtively, to see to it that I did some 'normal' things myself such as pull out books from the shelves and files from the racks. My officers, on seeing me do this, would sometimes rush to help. I would say, 'Please let me have some exercise!'

On July 28, the Prime Minister called at 9 p.m. He was

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

leaving for Colombo the next morning at the invitation of President Jayewardene of Sri Lanka. Rajiv explained to me that President Jayewardene had agreed to link the Northern and Eastern provinces with a proviso that at the end of one year the Eastern area would have the right to opt out of the Union if they so decided through a referendum. Rajiv also said that President Jayewardene had indicated to him that the period of one year for holding elections in the Eastern province was flexible and not mandatory. In Rajiv's opinion, this concession by Sri Lanka met to a large extent the demand of the Tamil groups for the merger of the Northern and Eastern provinces and that the militant group, the LTTE, should grab this opportunity. For this purpose Rajiv said he was using the good offices of the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, M.G. Ramachandran.

When I asked him about the change in Sri Lanka's rigid stand against the merger of the Northern and Eastern provinces, Rajiv said that he guessed that President Jayewardene was under extreme pressure from Janata Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) militants in the south of the island and wanted the release of Sri Lankan forces from Jaffna for deployment in the south.

He said that President Jayewardene wanted an Indian Peace-Keeping Force (IPKF) to undertake the responsibility for maintaining law and order in the Jaffna area. I cautioned the Prime Minister that he might be accused of interfering in the internal affairs of another country and therefore wanted him to protect himself with an appropriate written instrument of request from the Sri Lankan President.

I then asked Rajiv about the prospects of the LTTE and its leader Prabhakaran accepting these proposals. The Prime Minister said that his officers, particularly K.P.S. Menon, the Foreign Secretary, and J.N. Dixit, High Commissioner of India in Colombo, were already working at this task. He also

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

thought that M.G. Ramachandran, who had been so helpful to Prabhakaran and on whom he had some hold, was also trying to help in this matter. Then Rajiv made a significant statement: "We will sign the agreement and place it before the public. If the Tamil side rejects it, we will wash our hands of this problem. We have done our best."

On July 29, news arrived that President Jayewardene and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi had signed a historic agreement. The salient features of the agreement and annexures were:

(1) Merger of the Northern and Eastern regions into one administrative unit, subject to the right of the Eastern region to opt out of the unified province in a referendum to be held on or before 31st December 1988. The Sri Lankan President reserved the right to postpone the referendum at his discretion.

(2) At the request of the Sri Lankan Government an Indian Peace-Keeping Force to be maintained in the Jaffna area for preserving law and order.

(3) Sri Lanka to repatriate all foreign military and intelligence personnel.

(4) Trincomalee or any other port in Sri Lanka not to be made available for military use by any country in a manner prejudicial to India.

(5) An Interim Government to be formed, in the unified Northern and Eastern province pending elections.

There was surprise in India that President Jayewardene, who was adamant on giving nothing more than District Council status to the Tamil area of Jaffna, had moved so far as to agree to an Interim Government in the unified Northern and Eastern province. There was enthusiastic reception for the agreement in India. It was hailed internationally as a master stroke of statesmanship on the part of the two leaders. An American Senator went to the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

extent of suggesting the names of Rajiv Gandhi and Jayewardene for the award of the Nobel Peace Prize.

On July 30, around 11 a.m. I received information that while inspecting a guard of honour, a Sri Lankan naval rating had swung the butt of his rifle in a vicious attack on Rajiv Gandhi and that the blow missed the Prime Minister's head and had fallen on his nape and shoulder. This revealed the resentment of Sinhala people against the Indo-Sri Lanka agreement. The Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, R. Premadasa, made no secret of his hostility to the arrangement President Jayewardene was entering into with Rajiv Gandhi.

When I checked on this information I was assured that Rajiv was not seriously hurt and that he went through the ceremony in a normal manner and that he was already on board the return flight to Delhi. I sent a message to the aircraft as follows: "I am shocked to learn of the physical assault on you; thank God you have not been injured. Such are the hazards of waging peace."

I received information that Rajiv was arriving at 12.15 p.m. I had no doubt or hesitation in my mind that the right thing to do was to express the nation's concern over the attack and that nothing could demonstrate the concern as effectively as receiving the Prime Minister at the airport, and conveying the nation's relief at his providential escape. The establishment at Rashtrapati Bhavan felt strongly that it was against protocol for the President to go and receive the Prime Minister. I heard them out quietly and did not argue with them. I merely conveyed my decision to go and receive Rajiv Gandhi at the airport. The establishment of Rashtrapati Bhavan got to realise that I could be firm and that they could not make protocal binding on all matters.

Rajiv Gandhi was a little surprised and taken aback by my presence at the airport. There was a very large attendance of Ministers, officials and MPs. I made anxious enquiries

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

about the possible internal injuries and advised him to have a check-up immediately. Rajiv then explained that when he just passed the naval rating he saw something move behind him and he immediately ducked avoiding a hit on his head.

I then said *namaste* to Sonia who showed no sign of nervousness or anxiety. Asking all others who had come to receive him to wait, Rajiv came to my car and saw me off. He briefly said that he was very happy with the signing of the agreement and that he would come and talk to me at length about it.

At the airport Press conference, Rajiv Gandhi was his usual self, with his quick clipped replies. He complimented President Jayewardene as a man of tremendous courage and statesmanship. He thought a new era of friendship and cooperation would start with the Indo-Sri Lanka agreement. Then some pressmen referred to the resentment against this agreement in Sri Lanka and expressed doubt about the capability of President Jayewardene to implement it. Rajiv Gandhi said that "some Prime Ministers have problems with their Presidents (an allusion to President Zail Singh) and some Presidents have problems with their Prime Ministers" (a reference to the differences between Jayewardene and Premadasa).

This gesture of mine of receiving Rajiv at the airport was very favourably commented upon by Ministers, MPs, prominent citizens and the media. A newspaper comment said: "The level of concern was reflected in President, R. Venkataraman, breaking protocol, and coming to the airport to meet the Prime Minister." Another newspaper's headline read, "R. Venkataraman sets aside protocol, greets Prime Minister at airport." Several others made more or less similar observations. President Jayewardene won the hearts of the Indian people when he publicly apologised to the Prime Minister and the people of India. He said, "I express my

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

regret to the Prime Minister of India, Mrs. Gandhi and the two children and the Government and people of India for the insult offered to him (Prime Minister) today in the morning."

On July 31, the new Ambassador-designate of China presented his credentials to me. This was to be the first presenting of credentials to me and I was glad that it was of a major nation and neighbour of ours. The presentation of credentials in India is a very impressive ceremony with very few parallels. On the day appointed, the Chief of Protocol of the Government of India calls on the Ambassador-designate and then they drive together in a motorcade followed by the ambassador's wife and officers of the embassy. At the gate of Rashtrapati Bhavan, the Ambassador-designate alights from the car and takes his seat in the horse-drawn state coach along with the Chief of Protocol. Preceded and followed by the President's Bodyguard the state coach proceeds to the forecourt of Rashtrapati Bhavan. Here the Ambassador-designate inspects a Guard of Honour presented by the three services. The national anthem of the Ambassador-designate's country is played, followed by our national anthem. Then the Ambassador-designate is introduced to the Foreign Secretary or his representative who in turn introduces the Ambassador-designate to other officers. Led by the Military Secretary to the President, the Ambassador-designate and his officers and the Foreign Secretary and his officers arrive at the upper loggia adjacent to the Ashoka Hall. Meanwhile, the ambassador's wife, if present, the First Lady, and the officers of the embassy take their seat in the Ashoka Hall.

The President is then escorted to the Ashoka Hall where he takes his seat in a silver chair. The silver chair weighs about 640 kg and was used by British Emperor George V at the Delhi Durbar held in 1911-12. After independence, this chair was used by Presidents when they received letters of

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

credence from heads of missions accredited to India. Some time later when I organised a museum of the artefacts and memorabilia of Rashtrapati Bhavan I transferred the chair to the museum, so that it may be preserved for posterity. At the appointed hour, usually 10 a.m., the procession headed by the Military Secretary and followed by the Chief of Protocol and the Ambassador-designate would slowly march to the President's seat. The Ambassador-designate hands over his letter of credence and his speech. The President takes the letter of credence and places it on a cushion held by one of the liveried aides on his left. The President thereafter hands over his speech to the Ambassador and shakes hands with him and the officers present from both sides.

In the past the speeches used to be read at the ceremony, taking up a lot of time. Now they are taken as read. I found that the draft of the speech received by me from the Ministry of External Affairs was pedestrian. Perhaps not much attention was paid to these drafts as they were treated as another routine task. But having been used to a measure of thoroughness in preparation, I asked for a more carefully prepared draft. K.P.S. Menon, the Foreign Secretary and himself a former Ambassador to China, saw the point and sent me an excellent substitute. By and large thereafter, barring a few exceptions, drafts for the President were carefully prepared. The President and the Ambassador, accompanied by the officers then adjourn for a photo session when the official photograph of them together with the officers from both sides is taken. Neither the President's wife nor the ambassador's spouse is included in the official photograph.

The President formally welcomes the Ambassador and expresses the hope that during the tenure of the new Ambassador relations between the two countries will be strengthened.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Then the ambassador and the President discuss possibilities of economic cooperation and increasing trade between the two countries. On this occasion I expressed the hope that good relations between China and India would be re-established and that steps for confidence building between the two countries would be further strengthened.

On the forenoon of August 1, leaders of the moderate Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) of Sri Lanka, Amirthalingam and Sivasidambaram, called on me and expressed their deep appreciation of the Government of India and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi for the historic agreement that had been signed two days earlier between Sri Lanka and India. Amirthalingam was confident that peace would return to Sri Lanka and to the Tamils. He was eager that the interim council should be established soon with appropriate representation to the Tamil groups other than the LTTE, such as his own. In the afternoon, Rajiv Gandhi met me and gave a detailed account of the settlement reached with President Jayewardene. He also conveyed the happy tidings of the acquiescence of militants like the LTTE, and their promised cooperation in making the arrangement work. He was confident that the terms would be implemented by both Sri Lanka and the Tamil activists in good faith. He was beaming like a schoolboy who had won a prize.

Rajiv then told me that the Congress Party members had arranged a rally in Madras on August 2 to celebrate the Indo-Sri Lanka agreement and that such a rally without M.G. Ramachandran, who had contributed so much to the softening of the LTTE, and also borne the brunt of the attack from the DMK, would be unfair. He said, "Small men in our party wanted to take the entire credit for the settlement for themselves," and that when he learnt about it he had requested M.G. Ramachandran to postpone his departure

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

for America for a medical check-up by one day and join him in the rally. V.R. Nedunchezhian, who was the Finance Minister in Ramachandran's Cabinet, saw me in the evening. Apparently he did not know about Rajiv's request to Ramachandran and the latter's acceptance of the suggestion.

Soon after my election as Vice-President of India, Indira Gandhi had invited me to become the President of the ICCR (Indian Council for Cultural Relations). Till then the Minister for External Affairs was the President of the ICCR. As the Minister for External Affairs was always busy with his numerous preoccupations, the ICCR received scant attention and the Director-General, ICCR, an officer from the External Affairs Ministry, was all in all. As in other walks of life, the aspirants are many and the opportunities few. The artists' community was very critical of the functioning of the ICCR. During the three years I was in charge I widened its activities, streamlined the procedures and introduced a measure of objectivity in the selection of artists. I also provided opportunities for young talent. When I relinquished the Presidency of the ICCR, the artists hosted a reception for me and thanked me for the encouragement provided to them.

They included artists who had returned from the Festival of India in Moscow, maestros like Ravi Shankar and Amjad Ali Khan, dancers like Yamini Krishnamurthy, Sonal Mansingh, Sudharani Raghupathi and a large number of musicians from the Hindustani and Carnatic schools besides members of the Committee of the ICCR such as Pupul Jayakar, Kapila Vatsyayan and H. Y. Sharada Prasad. The ICCR Director-General, Lalit Mansingh, then narrated an incident. He said that I had asked the ICCR to provide an opportunity to a young artist of about 10 years to perform Bharatanatyam under the auspices of the ICCR and he thought that the girl was known to the Vice-President and

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

was one in whom he was interested. After the show Mansingh asked the girl how she happened to know the Vice-President. The girl's parents told him that they did not know the Vice-President at all and that to their surprise they received a letter from the ICCR inviting her to perform. I told them that I had read a very laudatory review of this little girl's performance in one of the weekly cultural columns and that was how the offer was made.

The very same evening, reports reached me that the rally in Madras was a tremendous success and Rajiv Gandhi had paid handsome tributes to M.G. Ramachandran for his invaluable contribution towards securing cooperation of the militants for working out the new agreement.

When I was Vice-President Rajiv Gandhi had appointed a number of national committees for the celebration of the centenary of eminent persons including poets. He had requested me to be Chairman of the Maithilisharan Gupt Centenary Committee. Maithilisharan Gupt is a celebrated Hindi poet, who among other things had kindled the spirit of nationalism and patriotism like Subramania Bharati. I had agreed to unveil a statue of this great poet at his birthplace, Chirgaon, near Jhansi, on August 3. I reached the village in the morning. This was my first visit outside Delhi as President and a large crowd of about one hundred thousand people came, apparently more to see their new President. The Governor, Mohammed Usman Arif, the Chief Minister, Veer Bahadur Singh of Uttar Pradesh, the Chief Minister, Motilal Vora of Madhya Pradesh, and a large number of Ministers and legislators participated in the function. I spoke in Hindi from a text which had been carefully prepared. Though I could read and understand Hindi, I have never been able to speak the language either in public address or in ordinary conversation. I could never master the gender used in the Hindi language and often committed mistakes of

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

using the masculine for the feminine and vice versa.

This gesture of mine of speaking in Hindi greatly enthused the crowd and they cheered even as I started my speech. The emotional appeal of language is something extraordinary. People go into raptures when others, particularly foreigners and people from other States, speak their language. I always preface my public utterances in the language of the people whom I address. The lusty cheers always give me a good start. In Europe, the French, German and other people feel greatly moved if one speaks to them in their language, even if one's command is rudimentary. I once said to a departing Japanese dignitary *sayonara*. He stopped, turned back with a broad grin and said that I was speaking Japanese correctly and exchanged pleasantries for one or two more minutes.

In my address I paid tributes to Maithilisharan Gupt's literary skill as well as his nationalism and patriotism. I condemned violence and appealed to the people to eschew it in thought, word and deed. I urged the people to follow the path shown by Maithilisharan Gupt who was a symbol of national unity and integration. Quoting a couplet from the great poet, I emphasised the need for building mutual affection and respect among peoples following different religions, faiths and philosophies. I returned to Delhi the same evening.

The Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), Yasser Arafat, made a courtesy call on me. I had known him for several years and had developed a good personal equation with him. I complimented him on the unity achieved in the PLO ranks and on his own election as Chairman. I reiterated India's unstinted support for a Palestinian homeland. Arafat was keen on an international conference on the Middle East under United Nations auspices, but the chances looked bleak as the USA was not

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

favourably disposed towards the move. I hosted a lunch for Arafat in which the Prime Minister, members of the Cabinet and prominent citizens participated. Ever since I became President I introduced the practice of inviting representatives of academia, the arts, industry and news media along with Ministers, parliamentarians and officials. This practice continued throughout my tenure.

During my days as Vice-President I had told the Prime Minister that at an appropriate stage in the Bofors discussion in Parliament he should clear his name and that of Sonia Gandhi by a statement. He was receptive but nothing more was said. On August 5, Union Minister Makhanlal Fotedar and Gopi Arora, Special Secretary to the Prime Minister, called on me and said that the Prime Minister was impressed with my suggestion, and that he wanted to know the appropriate form of the statement to be made. I said the statement could be brief and contain a simple denial of receipt of any consideration by the Prime Minister and members of his family and that if it was proved that any person had received any illegal gratification the Prime Minister would take stringent action against such persons. Then the emissaries left saying that they would frame the statement in consultation with the Prime Minister.

Every day a large number of citizens came to Rashtrapati Bhavan from different parts of India and sought permission to see the President. I therefore devised a system of general interviews once or twice a week. Groups of people used to come and wait in the Yellow Drawing Room on the ground floor. Usually at noon, I entered the room accompanied by the ADC and my personal assistant. Then I went round meeting each group or individual and enquired about their welfare. Most of them had no particular purpose and when I once asked them why they had spent money and taken the trouble to come to Rashtrapati Bhavan they answered in

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

utter simplicity in Hindi: *Hum dekhne ke liye aye hain* (We have come to see you). Sometimes they wanted photographs to be taken with the President. Quite a few presented petitions seeking relief from Government and local authorities. These were acknowledged by my office and forwarded to the respective authorities by the President's Secretariat. Occasionally I used to get letters thanking me for the relief obtained but these were few and far between. This exercise would last about half an hour to forty-five minutes. I maintained this system during all five years in office.

Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran called on me on August 5 on the eve of his departure to the United States for medical treatment. I complimented him on his role in the Sri Lanka accord and on his influencing the LTTE to cooperate in the implementation of the accord. I wished him a pleasant and comfortable sojourn and complete recovery from his illness. He said that he was keen to arrange a spectacular welcome for me in Madras as I was the first Tamil to be elected to the highest office, and that I should not visit Madras during his absence.

The same day the Prime Minister made a statement on the Bofors debate in the Lok Sabha. The House was taken by surprise, and the Opposition struggled for a while to react to the categorical assertion from the Prime Minister in the highest forum in the land. This had a great impact on the people and many told me that this statement should have been made much earlier.

It is customary for the new President after assumption of office to give a reception to the heads of mission accredited to the Government of India. I hosted a reception for the Diplomatic Corps on August 7. I knew almost every one of the heads of mission personally as I used to attend their national day celebrations as Vice-President. The Prime Minister, his wife, Ministers and officers of the External

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Affairs Ministry attended the function and spent a very pleasant hour.

During the reception Rajiv Gandhi told me that he was considering awarding the Bharat Ratna to Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the Frontier Gandhi, who was lying in a coma at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in Delhi. Ghaffar Khan hailed from the North-West Frontier Province, now in Pakistan. I told Rajiv that I had called on Badshah Khan twice at the hospital but he was unable to recognise anyone. I said that Badshah Khan was one of the staunchest lieutenants of Mahatma Gandhi and an apostle of non-violence and it would be appropriate to confer the Bharat Ratna as part of the celebrations of the 40th anniversary of Independence. I said I would prefer the presentation of the award as early as possible while he was still alive.

Madame Garcia de la Lama, Ambassador of Mexico, called on me and conveyed greetings of the President of Mexico, Miguel de la Madrid, whom I had known personally. The Mexican President had taken keen interest in the deliberations of the heads of state of the six nations which had formulated a peace plan. Madame Garcia had been in India for over seven or eight years and had developed a deep attachment to the country and its culture. She discussed the relative excellence of the arts and crafts of different parts of India and the similarity of some of these with Mexican arts. I told her that a Mexican colleague of mine in the U.N. Committee had told me that the red chilli was taken from Mexico to the Philiphines and from there it came to India, and that red chilli was not therefore a native plant of India. Madame Garcia said she could not vouch for it but thought it was quite probable.

From the manner in which Mexicans ate hot red chillies I could very well believe the story. In the fifties when I was a delegate to the United Nations General Assembly, I had

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

invited the Mexican delegation for dinner at one of the Indian restaurants. I told the chef that he should do his best to meet the tastes of the Mexican guests. When I looked at the table arranged for the dinner I found several small plates of fried red chillies arranged like cashewnuts, I was horrified and I asked the chef to replace them with nuts like almonds or cashews. The chef dismissed the suggestion and told me that the guests would like the red chillies best. My guests relished the red chillies and complimented me on the genuine Mexican dish.

J.R.D. Tata made a courtesy call on me. We had known each other from the days when I was in the Planning Commission and had developed a mutual regard for each other. Commenting on Rajiv's statement on Bofors in Parliament Tata said that though it was quite possible that neither Rajiv nor members of his family had received any consideration in the gun and other defence deals, it would be difficult to deny the receipt of commissions by the Congress Party. He felt that since 1980 industrialists had not been approached for political contributions and that the general feeling among them was that the party was financed by commissions on deals.

Late in the evening of August 8, Union Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao sought permission to announce the award of Bharat Ratna to Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan by the Prime Minister at a rally in Bombay to commemorate the Quit India Resolution passed on August 9, 1942. Normally announcement regarding the award of Bharat Ratna is made from Rashtrapati Bhavan. But in view of the fact that Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan was a valiant freedom fighter and had participated in the Quit India Resolution of August 9, 1942, I readily agreed to the announcement being made by the Prime Minister at the commemoration ceremony in Bombay. The comment that Rajiv Gandhi had violated a convention in

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

this regard was based on lack of information.

The Hindu festival of *Raksha Bandhan* in the month of August is observed as one of the important occasions in Rashtrapati Bhavan. Children and adults come to Rashtrapati Bhavan and tie the traditional *rakhi*, symbolising the brother-sister relationship and the assurance of the brother to protect his sister in times of need. Large numbers of children, particularly the handicapped, the blind, the spastic and the retarded come and tie *rakhis* on this day. This happened to be the first *rakhi* function in which I participated after I assumed office as President.

On August 10, P.V. Narasimha Rao called on me. He looked rather pale and tired and I made enquires about his health. Apparently he was under strain due to both political and administrative worries. He said that he was cutting out all work-related meetings on Sundays except for Cabinet and other unavoidable matters. Today I am very happy to see that Narasimha Rao as Prime Minister is alert, active, and full of energy, and carries the heavy load and responsibilities of the office of the Prime Minister with great élan. Happiness and success are obviously rejuvenating.

The Foreign Minister of Japan, Tadashi Kuranari, called on me. He conveyed the appreciation expressed by Prince Naruhito, son of the then Crown Prince (the present Emperor Akihito), for the warm welcome and splendid facilities extended to him (Prince Naruhito) when I was the Vice-President. Prince Naruhito is a charming young man with a wide general knowledge and knew many things about India even before he came here. The Foreign Minister expressed confidence that relations between Japan and India would grow and strengthen. He communicated the readiness of Japan to help India in its economic development. I drew the attention of the Foreign Minister to the seriously adverse balance of trade that India had with Japan and suggested that

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Japan could farm out less sophisticated work like heavy castings and machining of heavy equipment to India, reserving the more sophisticated work for themselves. The Foreign Minister said that it was an area worth exploring.

Thirty-five members of the Kalakshetra troupe from Madras, which was going to Moscow for participating in the Festival of India, met me in the evening. They were going to stage some Indian ballets on mythological themes. The Kalakshetra troupe is well known in the Soviet Union. As the greatest exponent of Bharatanatyam, Rukmini Arundale had given several scintillating performances there. I advised the troupe not only to maintain the high standard but also try to improve upon it.

Rajiv Gandhi hosted a family dinner in which members of our two families participated. Rajiv was a charming and lively host and could keep the entire gathering amused with jokes, anecdotes and stories. After dinner, the ladies retired to another room and Rajiv and I had a tête-à-tête. We talked of the Postal Bill and I told Rajiv that one way of solving the issue of assent to this Bill would be to obtain the views of the Attorney-General and act accordingly. Rajiv said that if I examined the Bill and suggested changes he would go along with it. I conveyed to him my feeling that the Bill was *not* necessary at all.

I then enquired from him whether there was any substance in the rumour that along with freedom fighters the surviving members of the Constituent Assembly would also be honoured at the time of the fortieth anniversary of Independence. He said he had also heard about this, but it did not appeal to him as some of the members of the Constituent Assembly were not participants in the freedom struggle.

On August 12, I recorded my first Independence Day message for relay on the eve of Independence day. While

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

addresses to both Houses of Parliament are drafted and approved by the Cabinet, the addresses of the President to the nation on Independence and Republic Days are prepared by only the President and his Secretariat. They represent the President's views and not those of the Government. They are sent to the Prime Minister in advance for perusal and comments as a matter of courtesy. The staff prepared drafts but I rewrote them, providing proper emphasis needed for the occasion.

Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma, then Governor of Maharashtra, accompanied by his wife Vimala, called on me and my wife at Rashtrapati Bhavan. They were on their way to Moscow to participate in the fortieth anniversary celebrations of India's Independence in the USSR. I had earlier mentioned to Dr. Sharma that I had proposed his name for the post of Vice-President of India. Dr. Sharma felt that his absence from India could prejudice his chances. He also said that there were suggestions that he should take over as the Congress President. I allayed his apprehension and assured him of my good offices in this regard.

A delegation of Bharat Scouts and Guides led by Sardar Lakshman Singh, the National Commissioner, called on me and displayed the "Peace Messenger" award which they received from the UNO on behalf of Bharat Scout and Guides India. I revealed to them that I had myself been a Boy Scout and Patrol Leader when at school and that I had actively participated in scouting activities in those days. This established a personal relationship with the National Commissioner and other office-bearers. Every year I held a reception at the Mughal Gardens for Scouts and Guides from all over India who assembled at Delhi. The National Commissioner explained that there were 40,000 Scouts and Guides in Punjab alone and that they had regular interaction with the people.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

A little over a year earlier Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi had constituted a national committee for the celebration of the fortieth year of Independence. It was his desire that patriotic and nationalist feelings that animated people before Independence should be rekindled and channelled towards purposeful activities for the nation. He had then requested me (when I was Vice-President) to take over the chairmanship of this National Committee. After my election as President, the Prime Minister and the National Committee, consisting of eminent people from all walks of life — parliamentarians, administrators, litterateurs, artists, scientists and others — which met to chalk out a programme of activity requested me to continue as Chairman.

A joint session of both Houses of Parliament was held on August 30 to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of Independence. It was a grand and impressive hour-long ceremony in the Central Hall of Parliament. The proceedings began with a relay of Pandit Jawaharlal's historic speech, "Tryst with destiny", made on the midnight of August 14, 1947, in the same hall. Thereafter, there was a resounding strike of drums and the gathering rose to observe a two-minute silence in memory of the martyrs who had laid down their lives for the freedom of the country. The gathering consisted of members of Parliament, some Governors of States, Chief Ministers, diplomats and a large number of distinguished guests. The President's Guards in liveried uniform, the fanfare, the beating of drums, all these added to the solemnity of the occasion and made this commemorative session truly memorable.

In my address I paid tribute to the valiant freedom fighters from the historic War of Independence of 1857 down to Mahatma Gandhi's martyrdom. I said, "India did not struggle for mere political freedom, the substitution of the white rulers by the brown, or the shifting of pomp and

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

pageantry from the aliens to the nationals. We promised the people that freedom was only an instrument to improve the lot of the masses and not an end in itself."

Then I referred to the distressing communal violence and political terrorism stalking the country and appealed to the people of India to rise above caste, creed, regional, religious and linguistic prejudices and recapture the spirit that animated the freedom movement. I concluded by saying, "We have achieved only one objective, viz., winning freedom, but we are still to reach the other goal of prosperity to the masses. In that sense our struggle is not yet over. Let us therefore rededicate ourselves to this great and noble task." The Prime Minister in his spirited address drew attention to the serious social injustices and disabilities faced by the masses. He also stressed the need for mutual accommodation founded on the principles of give and take in a democratic set-up.

The solemn ceremony kindled new waves of nationalistic fervour, not only among the persons present but throughout the nation. On August 14, there was a very simple but solemn investiture ceremony at the Durbar Hall when Frontier Gandhi, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan or Badshah Khan as he was called, the valiant freedom fighter and a close associate of Mahatma Gandhi, was awarded India's highest honour, Bharat Ratna. This ceremony was attended by the Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers, some judges, parliamentarians and distinguished guests. Khan Abdul Wali Khan, son of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, received the award on behalf of his father, as Ghaffar Khan was still in hospital.

During tea after the ceremony, Wali Khan recalled how his father had opposed the partition of India in 1947 and how Badshah Khan had to spend nearly twenty-seven years in Pakistani jails after Independence. Throughout his life

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Badshah Khan had opposed the Muslim League and its two-nation theory. I told Wali Khan that we had always remembered Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan's great contribution to communal harmony and national integration and the award of Bharat Ratna was only a small expression of our profound regard for the great leader.

Originally I had thought of holding the award ceremony on August 15 after the ceremony at the Red Fort. But Rajiv Gandhi reminded me that Badshah Khan never accepted the partition of the country and that he was very bitter about the August 15 celebrations saying that it did not mean independence for the Frontier people. I really appreciated his insightful suggestion.

On the evening of August 14 I held the traditional reception for freedom fighters. In the past there used to be only one reception, on August 15, for which freedom fighters were also invited. Since all the freedom fighters could not be included in the Independence Day reception, there was a complaint from them that their services to the struggle had been ignored. Hence a separate reception on August 14 was held for them. Freedom fighters are entitled to the facility of free railway travel, as are members of Parliament, as they come from different parts of India. A large number from Tamil Nadu came specially to meet their *own* President. At the reception, they overwhelmed the Prime Minister with requests for more facilities for them. Rajiv Gandhi managed to promise everyone everything.

On August 15, I watched the televised address of Rajiv Gandhi delivered from the ramparts of the Red Fort. He spoke eloquently, touching on problems like communal harmony, violence and terrorism, poverty and drought. At 3 p.m. President Zia-ul-Haq of Pakistan rang me up and gave his personal greetings on the occasion of Independence Day. I thanked him profusely for his kind sentiments and

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

conveyed our best wishes for the success and prosperity of Pakistan.

In the evening there was the Independence Day reception in the Mughal Gardens. The guests, including the Vice-President, the Prime Minister, diplomats, judges and other guests wait in a U-shaped formation round the red-carpated platform. The President, escorted by the ADC, Military Secretary and Officers, marches to the platform to the tune of the fanfare. The national anthem is played. Thereafter the President goes around meeting the distinguished guests. Normally, representatives of diplomatic missions come and convey the greetings of their respective countries to the President and the Prime Minister. On this occasion the Soviet Charge d'Affaires came up to me and began delivering a speech, though she was often interrupted by others. Perhaps the Russian diplomat felt that she had not had her full say. Out of three thousand five hundred invitations sent for the reception, over three thousand people responded and there was a lot of hilarity, bonhomie, and camaraderie.

The reception usually lasts 45 minutes at the end of which the national anthem is played and the President marches back the same way as he had earlier arrived.

As part of the fortieth anniversary of Independence, it had been arranged that the sacred soil on which the martyrs died or on which the great events connected with the freedom struggle took place, should be brought to Rajghat (Mahatma Gandhi's Samadhi) to be symbolically mixed into one entity. Every State had taken enthusiastic interest in collecting the soil from memorable places like Dandi in Gujarat and Vedaranyam in Tamil Nadu. The volunteers had arrived at Rajghat and had been arranged State-wise alphabetically.

On August 16, my wife and I arrived at Rajghat at 7 a.m. to take part in the ceremony of mixing the sacred soil from all over India. After singing *Vande Mataram* and Gandhiji's

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

favourite song *Vaishava Janato*, each State was called to come and place the soil in a receptacle placed on a special dais. It was a pleasure to see the volunteers marching proudly to place their soil in the receptacle. After all the States had done so, I mixed the soil together demonstrating the unity of India. A part of the soil so mixed was placed in a pit in which "the freedom tree" was planted by me. The thought came to me that perhaps a century later this tree may stand out as an emblem of the eternal unity of India.

Badshah Khan's condition had become critical and his people wanted him to be taken back to his native place. So a special plane was arranged to take him and his entourage back to his home. Several Ministers and doctors accompanied the ailing leader. At 10 a.m. I went to the AIIMS to make a farewell call on Badshah Khan, his son Wali Khan and members of his family. They were deeply touched. They thanked me and the Government of India profusely for the care and attention bestowed on Badshah Khan and for the honour conferred on him. I told them that India would always remember Badshah Khan as one of its own great leaders and cherish his memory. They also thanked the doctors for the services they rendered to Badshah Khan during his stay in the hospital.

Around 8 p.m. on August 17, the Prime Minister rang me up and said that a consensus had been reached with the Opposition on Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma for the office of the Vice-President and that he was taking the name to the Congress Parliamentary Board. I fully endorsed the decision and hoped the election would be unanimous.

Among the several visitors who saw me on August 18 was Arvind Lalbhai, the textile magnate. He painted a very gloomy picture of the economy and said that drought and rise in prices would constitute the greatest challenge to the Government. He bemoaned the stagnation in the textile

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

industry and the lack of purchasing power with the people. He condemned the Government policy of sustaining handlooms with reservation of items for that sector and predicted that the textile industry would be ruined. He was in favour of complete automation of the textile industry so that it became competitive in the external market and earned foreign exchange. I have heard this side of the story for several decades, but I have never got an answer from any of these people on how to solve our mass unemployment problem. The khadi and the handloom sectors are providing employment for over fifty million people directly and indirectly. No market-oriented economist has come forward with any concrete suggestion for redeployment of these people in other jobs. However, I did not indicate my views to Lalbhai, lest he might take double the time allotted to him.

"Parliamentarians for Global Action against Apartheid" is an active group of parliamentarians from all over the world committed to the ending of the pernicious policy of apartheid practised in South Africa. A small group of this organisation consisting of members from Europe, the Commonwealth countries, East European countries and others called on me for an exchange of thoughts and ideas. During the discussions I told them that the war raging between Iran and Iraq would have ended long ago, had not the countries which professed adherence to international peace and harmony supplied arms to the belligerents with some even selling arms to both parties at the same time. As for the plea of the United Kingdom and some European countries that the economic sanctions against South Africa would hurt the other African countries more than they would South Africa, I pointed out that in all struggles for freedom the present generation had to make sacrifices for the future well-being of their country and that when the African countries themselves were prepared to face the temporary hardships

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

there was no need for others to shed crocodile tears. The group consisting of members of Parliament from the U.K. and other European countries fully endorsed this sentiment.

Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma called on me after filing his nomination for the office of the Vice-President. He thanked me profusely and offered *pranam* in the traditional north Indian style. We discussed generally the responsibilities of the Vice-President and more particularly his function as the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha.

In this chapter I have tried to convey what the daily routine of the President of India is like, from weighty matters of state to small details about people and happenings that remain etched in one's memory despite the rush of events and blur of faces of a hectic schedule. If it reads like a series of discrete episodes it is because a President's schedule is very much like that in real life, where one has to switch from foreign policy issues to polite conversation about cuisine to domestic political intrigues to cultural relations to important ceremonial functions, all in a day's work. That, as I found, is the life of the man who lives in Rashtrapati Bhavan.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

4

At Rashtrapati Bhavan I constantly came across the established view of the staff about how a President should function. Whenever I tried to make an implicit or explicit claim to be myself and not only the President, there were often objections from the staff. In most cases I had to give in, for it is not easy to waive 'security' procedures or other matters of Presidential protocol.

Such an incident occurred soon after I had organised my daily routine. After my morning coffee I enjoyed reading the newspapers outdoors in the verandah which overlooks the North garden. The view from this loggia extends beyond the woods to North Avenue where the MPs' flats are located. After some days, however, I suddenly found that my view was obstructed by a wire mesh. I enquired of the Military Secretary the reason for this totally unnecessary impediment. He explained that since I was visible to anyone from the North Avenue flats, I was an easy target for being shot at even from that distance. So for security reasons the wire mesh had to be erected. I could do nothing about this but I am sure you will understand why a President feels hemmed in, both literally and metaphorically.

I had discussed with my officers the issue of whether the President's family should be served their meals from the Rashtrapati Bhavan kitchen and pay for them or have their own private kitchen. I decided to establish my own private

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

kitchen and pay for the provisions and stores purchased from the Rashtrapati Bhavan stores. I certainly do not believe in concessioned meals at government expense.

After breakfast at nine I made for the special office called "Shanti Niketan" which I had organised for myself on the ground floor. This elegant office, lined with bookshelves, contained all major books relating to the Constitution of India and British parliamentary practice. There were also essential books on Indian and world economy, politics, culture, literature and Eastern and Western philosophy. I began every day with a meeting with the Military Secretary, the Secretary to the President and the Joint Secretary.

The Military Secretary would inform me of the various invitations for functions received, as well as about official visits to locations within and outside India. We discussed which should be accepted and also set suitable dates for other engagements. Soon after I assumed office, the Military Secretary proposed that as the new President I should pay the customary ceremonial visit to all the States. I rejected this idea on considerations of economy and suggested instead that whenever there was a need to visit any State that could be deemed ceremonial. Usually the Military Secretary left the meeting after deciding upon the date and time for these tours and engagements.

I also informed the Secretary to the President that I wanted to change the usual practice of officers bringing files to me for my signature. I wanted all papers to be sent to me in locked boxes. I would then return the files with orders noted on them in the same locked boxes.

Since I was in the habit of reading all files myself, from the days when I was a Minister three decades ago in Madras, I wanted the same practice to continue. But very soon I found that even all the twenty-four hours of a day were insufficient to read the papers that came to me. I found that if I merely

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

signed the files brought to me and the contents were explained to me by the staff then only an hour's work was required. But if I read all the papers, even an entire day would not suffice. Yet I always preferred doing things myself and did not believe in shortcuts, so naturally I opted to read all files.

I classified my work into various categories:

(1) Those relating to the Cabinet, viz., items of the agenda for the Cabinet meeting. These came under (a) Cabinet decisions and (b) Assent to Bills.

(2) Matters relating to personnel, such as appointment of judges, Governors and other statutory authorities.

(3) Those relating to the Central universities of which the President is the Visitor, such as amendment to statutes, appointment of members to selection and other committees, and matters relating to Vice-Chancellors.

(4) Miscellaneous items relating to Rashtrapati Bhavan administration, regarding gardens, garage, etc.

I paid particular attention to the first three items. On matters relating to the universities I usually accepted the recommendations of the Education Ministry. As for matters relating to the Rashtrapati Bhavan administration, maintenance of the garden and the like, these were discussed in the morning meetings and decisions taken then. Minutes of the morning meetings with my officers were maintained regularly.

I also went on regular tours of Rashtrapati Bhavan with the officials of the Central Public Works Department as well as my staff, to acquaint myself with this sprawling building with its 340 rooms. To my horror, on one such tour I discovered that many of the grand rooms of the Viceregal palace were used as storage rooms for all kinds of serviceable and unserviceable materials. The State Room next to the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Ashoka Hall, for instance, was stuffed with movable furniture, so that this furniture be on hand for use in the Ashoka Hall or the Durbar Hall for meetings. This opulent room, earlier used by the Vicereine for holding her receptions, was decorated with gold-framed mirrors. Now the only occupants were these inanimate chairs occupying space in this princely hall. I directed that the room should be redone and used as a special Conference Hall for occasions such as the Governors' Conference, discussions with foreign delegations as well as important ceremonial occasions. With the available furniture in Rashtrapati Bhavan, an elegant conference table, comfortable chairs, a few racks for keeping papers were installed here. Similarly, microphone arrangements and translation facilities were provided. The Governor's Conferences, after my assumption of office, were held in this delightful and exquisitely furnished royal room. The discussion between the President of Cyprus with his delegation and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi with his delegation was also held here. So impressed was the President of Cyprus by this grand Conference Hall that he mentioned to Rajiv Gandhi that it must have been used on prestigious occasions by the British. During the state banquet that night Rajiv Gandhi mentioned this to me and said with a mischievous smile that he had half a mind to tell the President that it was used as a lumber room till recently!

Two other state rooms, one in front of the Conference Hall and another near the visiting dignitaries' suite, were stacked with surplus carpets and faded furniture. I organised the restoration of these rooms as well and decided that the one opposite the Conference Hall, the North Drawing Room, be used for receiving Heads of State and Ambassadors after presentation of their credentials. The South Drawing Room, I ordered, should be used by visiting dignitaries for receiving Indian visitors including the Vice-President, the Prime

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Minister, Cabinet Ministers, opposition leaders and so on. Restoration of the Conference Hall and the two drawing rooms was carried out by the CPWD in an unbelievably short time. I suppose my own enthusiasm was contagious. The Durbar Hall, known as the Throne Room during the British days, where the investiture ceremonies connected with civil and military awards are held also got a much-needed facelift. I felt that the dignity of the Durbar Hall would be further enhanced with the addition of two panels on either side of the statue of the Buddha. These would carry the Preamble to the Constitution in Hindi and English respectively and would serve as a constant reminder to the Government of its overall responsibilities under the Constitution.

I also discovered that though the Rashtrapati Bhavan establishment observed a five-day week, work continued regardless of hours and holidays. Urgent files used to arrive even at midnight and I often quipped that the Presidents perhaps signed them in their sleep!

Moreover, a large number of visitors preferred meeting the President on Saturdays and there was no staff to attend to any urgent or immediate business. In fact, I was sworn in as President on a Saturday and had to administer the oath of office to M.L. Fotedar as Minister the same evening. But there was no staff to meet the needs of the occasion as it was a weekly holiday! I discussed this problem with my officers at the morning meeting and suggested a reversion to the six-day week. The Secretary and other officers demurred, since they thought such a move might cause resentment among the staff. After further discussion I finally decided that half the staff of the Rashtrapati Bhavan establishment would attend on alternate Saturdays, a solution which pleased everyone. The Personal Staff made suitable arrangements among themselves to maintain the office routine on every day including Sundays and other holidays. The morning

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

meetings used to last 45 minutes to one hour. Thereafter I disposed of the important files for the day.

I granted interviews to those with whom serious discussions were involved, between noon and 1 p.m., and to others in the afternoon between 4 and 6 p.m.

I retired for a light lunch at half-past one and returned to the office at half-past three. In the evenings I often went for a refreshing walk or played badminton or sometimes golf. Before retiring to bed at 11 p.m. I spent about a couple of hours reading journals and miscellaneous publications. I would also read the Gita or dip into poetry and philosophy.

Fortunately I have never had insomnia and sleep quite soundly. This completely removes the stresses and strains of the day and enables me to wake up totally refreshed the next morning.

The Press commented on my Presidential style of functioning as follows. "Insiders say that Mr. R. Venkataraman is a 'no nonsense' President and that he goes about his daily routine just like a Secretary in any government department. When the Military Secretary visited him recently to set up the President's first visits to various States in the country, he was told that there was no immediate need to travel. The general practice is that the President tours the country within the first two months of taking office. But the new President continued to stay put. It is a very sensible move by the new President who has shown awareness of the country's need for economy. So routine ceremonial tours never appeal to Venkataraman. Usually such tours amounted to a Bharat Darshan and achieved very little else."

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

5

There are many people who visualise the President's role as largely ornamental, and think that he mainly presides over functions and so on. Let me assure you this is a total misconception. Attending or presiding over ceremonial functions is undoubtedly a major aspect of one's duties but there is much more to deal with. Political events of great significance claim one's attention constantly, both at the national and the international level. For instance, events in Sri Lanka may have serious repercussions for India.

On August 18, there was a bomb blast in the Sri Lankan Parliament when President Jayewardene was presiding over a meeting of the United National Party parliamentary group prior to the Parliament session. One member was killed and fourteen others, including Prime Minister Premadasa and seven of his Cabinet colleagues were injured. A group calling itself the "Patriotic Peoples' Movement" claimed responsibility for the blast. They felt that the Sri Lankan Government had betrayed its people by entering into an agreement with India. President Jayewardene himself was not injured and he asserted that his Government would carry out the terms of the agreement with India despite the "evil force" working against him. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi telephoned me to discuss the incident and expressed his anxiety over the implementation of the Indo-Sri Lankan accord. Both of us sent messages to President Jayewardene

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

condemning the attack and expressing our concern over the injuries to ministers.

I would like to note here that earlier, following the naval rating's attack on Rajiv Gandhi in Colombo during his inspection of the guard of honour while visiting Sri Lanka, I became concerned about VIP security on such occasions. I invited Admiral Tahiliani, then Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, for a discussion. I wished to know if he could confine the ceremonial receptions only to the salute and dispense with the inspection part of it. The Chief opposed this idea. He said it was an international practice and that dispensing with the inspection of the guard of honour would amount to a discourtesy to the visiting dignitary.

In order to solve this problem he suggested that the red carpet on which the visiting dignitary walked could be placed two metres away from the line so that the risk of assault be minimised. I asked the Naval Chief to consult the other Chiefs of Staff and to let me know their views on the matter. It is customary to receive visiting dignitaries in the Air Force Wing of Palam airport, called the "technical area". This involves a large number of people going to the airport to receive the guest of honour and blocking of traffic for a considerable period of time causing much inconvenience to the public.

As Defence Minister I had suggested to Indira Gandhi that ceremonial receptions be shifted from the airport to Rashtrapati Bhavan, so as to avoid the to and fro movement of a large contingent of people. I made the same suggestion to Rajiv Gandhi who took the idea seriously and discussed its modalities with me. When Admiral Tahiliani visited me I sounded him out on the proposal of shifting the ceremonial receptions to the forecourt of Rashtrapati Bhavan. I told him that in the case of Heads of State, the President could receive the dignitaries at the forecourt and in the case of Heads of

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Government, the Prime Minister could discharge the same function.

The visiting dignitary would be received at the airport by a Minister and the Chief of Protocol and escorted to Rashtrapati Bhavan for the ceremonial reception. I asked Admiral Tahiliani to consult the other Chiefs of Staff on this matter also. There was complete agreement on this change on all sides and it was introduced soon afterwards.

On the evening of August 25 the Sri Lankan Minister for Transport, M.H. Mohamed, accompanied by the High Commissioner for Sri Lanka, called on me. After the usual exchange of compliments, I welcomed the accord between the Prime Minister of India and the President of Sri Lanka and hoped that peace would prevail in that strife-torn country. The Minister, however, made a significant point. He said that he was opposed to merging the Northern and Eastern regions of Sri Lanka into one province but had accepted it only because there was an option for the Eastern region to delink from the Northern region by a democratic process of referendum. He said that in the Eastern region the Muslims had a chance of obtaining the Chief Ministership of the Provinical Council. In his view the Sinhalese and the Muslims would vote together for a separate Eastern province. I was deeply disturbed by the Sri Lankan Minister's approach. It was totally at variance with the complacency Rajiv Gandhi had shown during his earlier talks with me. I immediately sent a letter to Rajiv Gandhi stating the Sri Lankan Minister's approach and his reservations on the merger. A few days later Rajiv Gandhi sent a reply saying, "We will have to find some way of overcoming resistance to the merger of the Eastern region with the North. It is vital that the Tamils build bridges with the Muslims in the Eastern province".

On September 4, our High Commissioner to Sri Lanka, J. N. Dixit, briefed me about the developing situation in Sri

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Lanka. He said that the LTTE was not cooperating wholeheartedly and had several reservations about the accord. He said that as against the proposal for equal representation of five members in the interim administrative council to the LTTE and five to all the other groups, the LTTE wanted exclusive control for itself. I told Dixit to do his utmost to save the Indo–Sri Lankan agreement, as in my opinion it was the best accord that could ever have been secured. I also told him that I would discuss with the Prime Minister the possibility of giving the LTTE a majority in the interim council. Dixit paid warm tributes to President Jayewardene for his courageous decision in the face of opposition from the Buddhist monks, as well as his own party leaders.

When the Prime Minister met me for a briefing he referred to the situation in Sri Lanka and the difficulties they were running into. He was worried about the attitude of the LTTE towards the other Tamil groups. He thought that the entire experiment of the interim council would fail if all the Tamil groups did not cooperate with one another in the running of the merged Northern and Eastern provinces. I saw in the Prime Minister a distinct change in mood from one of elation to one of despondency.

On September 7, the Sri Lankan Finance Minister Ronnie de Mel and his wife came over for a visit. We had become good friends during our visits to the various meetings of the Fund-Bank and the Asian Development Bank. I had visited Sri Lanka as leader of the delegation for Indo–Sri Lankan Economic Cooperation meetings and he in turn visited me. During the tête-à-tête he expressed apprehension that the LTTE leaders were sabotaging the Indo–Sri Lankan accord and that it would greatly jeopardise President Jayewardene's position. He said that President Jayewardene had, at considerable risk to his reputation and in the face of severe opposition, brought about this agreement and that if it failed, his credibility would diminish. He wanted India to curb the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

LTTE and prevent arms and ammunition from reaching it.

I assured him that Rajiv Gandhi would strain every nerve for the success of the accord and that he wanted to work the accord in a spirit of cooperation. It was evident from Ronnie de Mel's conversation that doubts had already surfaced about the implementation of the agreement.

On September 12, the Prime Minister made another of his fortnightly visits to Rashtrapati Bhavan. He said that the LTTE had reneged on the promise of cooperation and had actually adopted a hostile attitude towards the other Sri Lankan Tamil groups. He said that this internecine fighting had created problems for the Indian Peace-Keeping Force (IPKF). Then he talked of his impending tour abroad. He told me that he had to go to the United States to address the U.N. General Assembly, visit Spain and one or two other European countries and that he was under great pressure to visit a number of other countries as well. I advised him to curtail his absence from the country to a week or ten days at a time. I said problems in India required the personal attention of the Prime Minister and remote control methods did not work satisfactorily in this country.

During this period the security arrangements at Rashtrapati Bhavan again claimed my attention. Bhagwat Jha Azad, a former colleague of mine in the Union Council of Ministers and a close associate since the time of the first Parliament, came to meet me. However, the security staff of Rashtrapati Bhavan stopped him and asked him to walk the one kilometre up to the main entrance! Fortunately, Bhagwat Jha did not consider me responsible for this but called for my Joint Secretary who had arranged for the entry pass for his car. Once again I was annoyed with this rigid security system. Therefore, the very next morning during the meeting with officials I decided that Cabinet Ministers, foreign dignitaries and special invitees would drive straight to the North Court entrance and that members of Parliament,

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

senior officials and other such visitors would drive straight to the South Court entrance of Rashtrapati Bhavan. This arrangement proved very satisfactory to all concerned.

Rashtrapati Bhavan has a small theatre in the basement. Usually, films are screened for members of the President's family and residents of the Estate. Owing to my interest in classical music and dance I improved the acoustics and lighting of the theatre and organised a series of music concerts and dance performances, and occasionally had award-winning films screened. The first of the music recitals was by the violinist T.N. Krishnan accompanied by his son and daughter. The Prime Minister, Sonia Gandhi, the Chief Justice, Ministers and all the Service Chiefs attended. A list of permanent invitees was drawn up and invitations mailed to them.

A statue of the standing Buddha had been placed behind the gilded chair for the *Rashtrapati* on the dais in the Durbar Hall. I enquired how the statue came to be placed there when there was none in any other hall. I was told that it was not a part of Edwin Lutyens's design but was installed later. In Sharda Prasad's delectable volume on the story of the President's House, which I encouraged him to write before the end of my term, there is an account of how this statue came to be there. It appears that there was an exhibition of Indian art in London in 1947-1948, and valuable pieces exhibited there were brought to India to be housed in the National Museum in Delhi. Two of the pieces, namely, the Buddha and the bull, in front of the Durbar Hall, were not transferred to the Museum but retained in Rashtrapati Bhavan. I must say that these are precious legacies for Rashtrapati Bhavan. It is a good thing to have a statue of the Prince of Renunciation in that hall where the high and the mighty assemble to bestow and receive honours. The Buddha's image gives one a sense of the evanescence of material pleasures.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

If the Durbar Hall is majestic, the Ashoka Hall is charming. It is used for receiving the credentials of foreign diplomatic representatives, holding cultural functions for visiting dignitaries and as a reception room before state banquets. In the British days it was a dance hall and hence the wooden floor. The ceiling is beautifully painted with hunting and court scenes on camel leather. Even when I regularly attended the banquets as Vice-President, I had noticed visible wear and tear in the paintings and their need for restoration. So I had the paintings dismantled, restored and then displayed. I used to draw the attention of visiting dignitaries to these paintings with a touch of pride.

On August 20, when my wife and I called on Rajiv and Sonia Gandhi and offered our felicitations on Rajiv's birthday, he told me that he had information that Pakistan was preparing for an onslaught in the Siachen area. He was sending a message to President Zia-ul-Haq not to precipitate matters and said that we would wait for President Zia's reaction.

Rajiv also said he wanted to induct Governors into the Cabinet. I advised him to do this sparingly and only when there was need to strengthen his Cabinet in any particular department. I said that among the then Governors, Bhishma Narain Singh, Governor of Assam, would make an excellent Minister for Parliamentary Affairs and could be considered. Then Rajiv said that he would like to appoint some Cabinet Ministers as Governors. I cautioned him against necessitating by-elections to the Lok Sabha and mentioned the names of Hitendra Desai, former Chief Minister of Gujarat, and B.R. Bhagat, former Speaker, for Governors' posts.

On August 21, Laldenga, the then Chief Minister of Mizoram, now no more, made a courtesy call to congratulate me on my election. He confessed that during the twenty years he had been a rebel and he could not do anything for his people. Now that he was in office and was able to serve

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

his people in a constructive manner, he realised the futility of confrontation. He expressed the hope that other separatist groups in the country would learn from his experience and give up the futile path of confrontation. I was agreeably surprised because it was the same Laldenga who had once said that nothing short of an independent Mizoram would be acceptable to his people.

In Britain, by convention the Prime Minister meets the monarch every week on Tuesday evening for a briefing. It was arranged between the Prime Minister and myself that he would call on the President for a briefing once a fortnight on Saturday morning at 10 without prejudice to our other meetings, whenever required. The Prime Minister would prepare elaborate notes and discuss many matters with me for nearly an hour.

On August 22, the Prime Minister gave me a full report on: (1) the drought situation; (2) Sri Lanka; (3) Bofors; and (4) Governors.

On the first topic he said that nearly 80 per cent of the country had been affected and that the Cabinet committee proposed to take various steps. I made the following suggestions.

First of all, the scarcity psychosis should be removed and publicity given immediately to the comfortable foodgrain buffer stock in the country. I said that the people should be taken into confidence and told that the deficit of 15 million tonnes could be taken care of by the 26 million tonnes of buffer stock.

I added that foodstuffs and edible oil should be made freely available to the rural poor. I further said that since inflation would accentuate demand, the Government should follow a tight money policy and postpone avoidable expenditure and extravagance. I suggested that the Festivals of India which were being organised for the year may be deferred to the next year. Rajiv Gandhi readily agreed and

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

said he had thought of it himself. Regarding the tight money policy, he said he would ask Finance Minister N.D. Tiwari to meet me and discuss it.

About the Bofors issue, he said that he was quite anxious to get all the details regarding payments to Indian nationals but then the Bofors company did not want to violate commercial secrecy as it would affect its future deals. I told Rajiv that as Defence Minister I knew that all arms manufacturers were employing agents and remunerating them under different names. Therefore, it would be unrealistic to think that foreign arms dealers did not have agents. But utmost care should be taken to see that they did not influence our decisions.

It had always been my firm belief that Governors are appointed to look after the State in their charge and should devote their entire time to the affairs of their State. In the early years strict rules were framed permitting Governors to visit their home States only twice a year and that too for periods not exceeding ten days. Later, when some ex-Cabinet Ministers were appointed Governors they started touring the whole country at their States' expense on the pretext of accepting local engagements. I was told that they even manoeuvred to get invitations from other States and some of these invitations were for functions as minor as presiding over some film fans' association. On a scrutiny of these tours I found that some Governors had been outside their State for as much as one hundred days in a year! I mentioned this to Rajiv Gandhi.

Rajiv Gandhi told me that he was a little surprised at the extended tour programmes of the Governors outside their States and wanted me to advise them suitably in this regard. He also mentioned that the offices of the Governors of Haryana, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala had to be filled soon.

I suggested the names of Syed Mohammed, former High

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Commissioner to the U.K., Hitendra Desai, former Chief Minister of Gujarat, and Air Marshal Naidu, former Military Secretary to the President, for some Union Territories. Rajiv Gandhi noted their names in his little pocket book. He was quite relaxed and it looked as if the turmoil in Parliament over Bofors and other issues had not disturbed his equanimity greatly.

On Sundays I usually followed this routine: I neither went down to office nor received any visitor till 4 p.m. and met only the 'unavoidable' callers. I usually devoted Sunday evenings to playing golf in the lush well-maintained golf course of Rashtrapati Bhavan.

It was on Sunday, August 23, that Arun Nehru came to see me. He complained bitterly about the reduction in the security cover given to him and members of his family. Earlier some legislators from Uttar Pradesh had complained to me and to Rajiv Gandhi that provision of top security facilities such as escort vehicles and armed guards to V.P. Singh and Arun Nehru created an impression among the people that they were still in power or commanded the respect of the Government. Perhaps this had led to the reduction of the security arrangements for these people.

Arun Nehru said that Rajiv Gandhi had been wrongly advised to make the statement in Parliament that neither he nor any member of his family had received any consideration in the defence deals. I told him that once the members had made allegations in Parliament against the Prime Minister it was his duty to clarify the mattter, lest it should be understood as acquiescence or acceptance without denial in the highest forum in the land.

Arun Nehru said that he had all affection and regards towards his "brother Rajiv" and that the confrontation between them was totally unnecessary. But, he added, he and V.P. Singh had been pushed into a desperate position; they had never intended to challenge Rajiv Gandhi's

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

authority or to do him any harm. I thought this was a veiled overture for reconciliation. I did not respond as these inter-personal political wrangles were of no interest or concern to me. He criticised some of Rajiv Gandhi's close associates and said that they were responsible for misleading him. After having unburdened himself for nearly an hour, he left, promising to call again.

Later in the evening of August 27, M.L. Fotedar called on me and said that Arun Nehru, who had a long chat with me on the previous Sunday (August 23) was spreading rumours that he had had a heart-to-heart talk with the President and that the President was very sympathetic to the dissidents in the party. For my part, I gave Fotedar a gist of my talk with Arun Nehru and conveyed my impression that Arun Nehru was desirous of a reconciliation with Rajiv Gandhi. On the next day, August 28, Rangarajan Kumaramangalam, MP, told me that there was a strong rumour in the Central Hall that I had asked Rajiv Gandhi to resign. He hinted that the rumour could have emanated from Arun Nehru who had a chat with me a few days earlier. I laughed at the idea and wondered why people feasted on rumours and spread them by repetition. I told him that it was a national failing with us to accept gossip as gospel.

The same evening, my Joint Secretary, Gopal Gandhi, told me that Rangarajan of the UNI news agency and Bhatnagar, my Deputy Press Secretary, conveyed to him the information that at a Press conference, Kamalapati Tripathi had said off the the record that the President had asked the Prime Minister to resign. I immediately telephoned Tripathi and mentioned this to him. He totally denied having said any such thing. Thereupon I asked Gopal Gandhi to deny the report if it appeared on the teleprinter. Fortunately, nothing appeared. I generally ignore the rumours of Delhi's gossip mills but this one had potential for mischief since it seemed to come from a most respectable source (Tripathiji) and

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

touched upon the President–PM equation.

Manubhai Shah, former Union Minister for Commerce, paid me a courtesy call during which he said that there was a deep-rooted suspicion among the people that the Government had received kickbacks in the Bofors deal and that unless the Government cleared its name its prospects in the next elections would be bleak. He felt that Rajiv Gandhi should demand the names of people who had taken comissions or bribes from Bofors and if they did not respond favourably, threaten to cancel the contract. For my part I was not sure whether the threat would work. But I told him that he could convey his ideas to the Prime Minister.

Flinging mud on politicians without verification has become the favourite pastime of the media. A journal had actually charged Madhav Rao Scindia, then Cabinet Minister for Railways, with FERA violations. Scindia came to me in an agitated frame of mind. He said that these stories emanated from his political rivals. He explained to me that he had been a director in three foreign companies even before the enactment of the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA) in 1973 and that when the Act came into force he had written to the Finance Ministry disclosing the facts and seeking permission to continue as director. He was so upset that he said he was quite happy to be a plain MP and go on with his many social and other activities. I calmed him saying that these were the occupational hazards of politics and that several decades ago Bryce in his book on modern democracy had stated that men in public life had to be "thick-skinned". I told him that in public life one has to accept both praise and calumny with equanimity and should neither get elated nor depressed by these transient turn of events. One should be honest to oneself. He looked relieved and left in a more relaxed frame of mind.

Somnath Chatterji, Madhu Dandavate, Indrajit Gupta and one or two other MPs presented a memorandum to me

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

stating that the second television channel to be introduced by Doordarshan should be given exclusively to the States. Their plea was the regional activities were not adequately projected on television and that the second channel should not be a replica of the first. Their main object, clearly, was to ensure sufficient publicity to State governments. I told them that I was not supposed to interfere with the details of administration but would nevertheless forward their representation to the Government for consideration.

P.V. Narasimha Rao, who was in charge of Human Resource Development and who had invited me to present the Teacher's Day award on September 5, apologised that he would not be present on the occasion in Delhi as he had to go to Mauritius to participate in the Ocean Festival. Though I did not mind his absence I thought that an engagement fixed for the President should have precedence over an Ocean Festival abroad and that he could have substituted a Minister from the External Affairs Ministry or any other Department. However I did not make this an issue.

P.V. Narasimha Rao referred to the rumour in the Central Hall that Arun Nehru had shown some documents to me on the basis of which I had called for Rajiv's resignation. He also said that it was being rumoured that my office had warned the Press against publishing any such report. I laughed at it and said that rumours grew fatter by repetition, each one adding something to the story. Then I narrated to P.V. the sequence of events in which Kamalapati Tripathi was reported to have stated, off the record, that the President had asked the Prime Minister to resign and how Tripathi flatly denied having said any such thing. I told P.V. that Delhi was the greatest gossip mill.

On August 31, the dissidents from Manipur led by Tompak Singh complained to me bitterly against the Chief Minister, Reishang Keishing, charging that he was in league with the rebel insurgents. They further said that while the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Meiteis formed the majority of the population, Nagas represented only 20 per cent of the people and that a Naga Chief Minister was not acceptable. As Defence Minister I had noticed his sneaking sympathy for the insurgency. After a surprise attack on nineteen defence personnel at Ukhoul in Manipur during combing operations, the Chief Minister came and complained to me against the Army though the Army was the aggrieved party. Many Manipur officers also openly sided with the villagers who had orchestrated the vilification of the Army. Even after I talked to him several times to help the Army maintain peace and security in Manipur, he did precious little to assist them. My reports to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi at that time did not have much effect. The President can listen but cannot express his opinions. Even if he as much as sighs it would be interpreted as support for the representation. So I held my tongue till the discussion was over and I concluded, repeating my unfailing formula, "I shall look into it."

On September 3, Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma was sworn in Vice-President of India. I administered the oath in Hindi. The ceremony was a solemn and austere affair and Dr. Sharma mingled freely with the guests. His charming manners have gained him many friends.

In our defence set-up in India there is no one single Chief of the Defence Forces but three Chiefs of Staff who function independently under the direction of the Minister for Defence. However, for the purpose of coordination there is a Chiefs of Staff Committee of which the seniormost among them functions as the Chairman.

On September 5, the Prime Minister made his fortnightly call and stayed for an hour. He said that he did not take seriously the rumour that Kamalapathi Tripathi had mentioned, 'off the record', that the President had called for the resignation of the Prime Minister and he dismissed it as Central Hall gossip. I asked him to probe the origin of the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

rumour. As usual, he took out his pocket book and noted this down. I could not help recall how different his mother's method had been. Indira Gandhi had a gift of remembering even minor matters and pursuing them if she wanted. She also had a genius for communicating just as much as was necessary for the occasion.

Rajiv again consulted me about the appointment of Minister G.S. Dhillon as Governor of Maharashtra and P.C. Alexander as Governor of Kashmir. I told him that decisions about the appointment of Governors should be taken a month before the expiry of the term and that they should not be continued after their term on a daily basis. I said this should not be very difficult because the Government knew the dates of retirement of Governors right from the day they were appointed. I drew his attention to the number of vacancies in the High Courts and the irritation it caused among the members of the Bar, the Bench and the people. I told him the task would be easy if he accepted the recommendation of the Chief Justice of India without any further scrutiny by the Minister of Law. I then said that an independent judiciary was a great asset to the Government and that a pliable judiciary would be pliable for the Opposition too if and when it came to power.

On September 9, Dr. V.S. Arunachalam, the Scientific Adviser to the Defence Minister, gave a detailed account of the progress made on the Arjun tanks, T-72 tanks, armoured personnel carriers and the missile programme, all of which I had initiated as Minister of Defence. He then recalled my query to him as Defence Minister as to whether the quick-firing 'Grad 22' or the Soviet 152 mm guns would not suffice instead of going in for the 155 mm Bofors guns. He said that if India had gone in for any one of them it would have been saved from all the Bofors scandals that had erupted later. I also reminded him that at that time our defence experts were plumping for either the French or the Swedish 155 mm guns

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

and that it was my nature not to overrule or contradict expert opinion.

The Governor of Andhra Pradesh, Kumudben Joshi, met me later that day. She complained bitterly about Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao and about arbitrariness and corruption in the Andhra government. I advised her that the Governor had no supervisory role over the Chief Minister but that the Governor could send a confidential report to the Prime Minister if the charges were serious and based on really credible material. I felt that it was my constitutional responsibility to guide the Governors on the shaping of their relationship with their Chief Ministers.

Inder Malhotra, an eminent editor and a well informed columnist, dropped in for a chat. I had known him since 1950 when I became a Member of the provisional Parliament. He had matured into a dignified and distinguished journalist with a very rare quality of intellectual integrity. He bemoaned the deterioration in the parliamentary debates and in the consideration of legislative measures. He recalled how the bills were debated, clause by clause, and how amendments were moved and discussed then. He also referred to the late H.V. Kamath who was a model parliamentarian and who used to scrutinise every clause.

In those days I used to sit in the Parliament House from commencement to conclusion like a regular student and intervene whenever there was an error or lapse.

For instance, while dealing with the amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code, Anantasayanam Ayyangar, Deputy Speaker, wanted Home Minister Rajagopalachari to introduce an amendment empowering the Central Government to transfer pending cases from one State to another. Anantasayanam Ayyangar argued that before 1941 the Governor General had powers to transfer cases from one court in a Province to a court in another Province and he wanted this power to be exercised by the Central

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Government. Accordingly the Home Minister moved an amendment to that effect.

Though I was not interested specifically in the subject and I was only watching the proceedings I felt that vesting the power in the Central Government to transfer cases from one State to another was not appropriate. I immediately moved an amendment that for the words 'Central Government' the words 'Supreme Court' be substituted. I said that the separation of the judiciary from the executive was one of the principles of our state policy and that if cases were to be transferred from one State to another the appropriate authority to do it would be the Supreme Court and not the Central Government. This view of mine was supported by eminent parliamentarians like Pandit Thakurdas Bhargava and Dr. Tek Chand and others. So overwhelming was the opinion against the vesting of the power of transfer of cases with the Central Government that the Home Minister himself wanted to withdraw his amendment. Since permission to withdraw was not granted by the House, the amendment was put to vote and defeated with the Home Minister himself voting against it.

I am citing this as an instance to show how private members of Parliament could contribute to the legislative business. It is not necessary, as is often mistakenly imagined, that in Parliament a talent for drama or a booming voice counts in the ultimate analysis. Rather it is mental agility, careful homework and preparedness that make the more lasting contribution.

On September 11, Rajiv Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi invited me and my family for an intimate private dinner. We cracked jokes and even Sonia, whose expression is usually serious, heartily joined in the laughter. The food was served on *thalis*, Indian style, and some special southern dishes were prepared for us. We found the children, Rahul and Priyanka, under great stress. For security reasons they could not go to

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

school, mix with children of their age or have any of the associated pleasures of childhood. They told us that they made up for this lack by talking to friends on telephone. They were not allowed to go even to Rashtrapati Bhavan to play tennis. I told them about my own severe security constraints; that I was not allowed to go beyond the Moghul Gardens nor enjoy walking in the lovely woods with their peacocks and other exquisite birds. I also mentioned the acute discomfort I faced of having half a dozen people walking around me, even during my evening constitutional. Now it was the turn of the children to commiserate with me!

The Dalai Lama paid me a visit on September 13. After complimenting me on my election he said that Tibet was in great ferment, that the people of Tibet faced severe repression and were suffering untold miseries. He wanted enlightened world opinion to help liberate Tibet from the Chinese yoke. He said that he was going to Europe to gather goodwill and support for the Tibetan cause. This put me in a tight spot. India was the first country to have recognised Chinese suzerainty over Tibet. We enthusiastically supported the seating of China in the United Nations in place of the Kuomintang regime. So I maintained an inscrutable expression and a stony silence. The Dalai Lama understood my position and changed the tenor of his speech. He thanked India for the asylum provided to Tibetan refugees and the facilities and courtesies offered to him personally. Such are the twists and turns of destiny that a person who was considered God-incarnate had to go like a mendicant from country to country pleading his cause.

On September 14, Admiral Roy, Vice-Chief of the Eastern Naval Command, conveyed to me the pleasant news that the Government had finally decided to take the first nuclear-propelled submarine from the Soviet Union on lease, as purchase would entail acceptance of NPT conditions. The idea of acquiring a nuclear-propelled submarine was floated

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

by me as Defence Minister and after months of bargaining the Soviets agreed. A training programme was arranged for Indian sailors. I had visited the trainees in Leningrad and Riga. I was also happy that the lease amount charged by the Soviet Union was fairly reasonable. The nuclear-propelled submarine had the advantage of staying much longer under water than the conventional submarine.

It was also proposed at that time that a second nuclear-propelled submarine would be built in India. The Atomic Energy Agency and more particularly its chief, Dr. Raja Ramanna, were confident of producing an atomic power pack for the submarine. I felt proud on the fulfilment of one of my pet projects.

On September 19, when the Prime Minister made his routine fortnightly call he referred to the mounting tension around the Siachen glacier. He expressed confidence that our troops would be able to meet any challenge. Then we discussed the dissident activity in Maharashtra. The Prime Minister complimented the then Chief Minister of Maharashtra, S.B. Chavan, on proving to be an able administrator and a man of high integrity. However, he felt that the Chief Minister was unable to keep the party together. He was worried that any change in Maharashtra would make the situation worse. I suggested to the Prime Minister that he might talk to the dissidents as well as to the Chief Minister and bring about a rapprochement. I also said that it was easier said than done.

The Vice-President established a convention of calling on me once a fortnight. This enabled me to communicate to him events of national importance and take in his views on many issues. The Vice-President had taken on from me a number of responsibilities such as being the President of the ICCR, Chancellor of Gandhigram, Pondicherry, Punjab and Delhi Universities. Since we shared common views on many issues, the talks were always pleasant and cordial.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

On September 22, the veteran Congress leader, Kamalapati Tripathi, insisted on calling on me. I told him that I preferred to visit him to enquire about his health and that he should not take the trouble of coming to see me. But he would hear none of it. He insisted that it was his duty to make the first call on the President. This was an instance of old world courtesy. Kamalapati regretted the fall in standards among the present-day Congressmen and said something must be done to restore the old values. He also felt that the Congress organisation had completely got out of touch with the people and that the mass contact programme of Mahatma Gandhi should be revised.

Kamalapati then asked me about a story in the newspapers that a rift had already started between the President and the Prime Minister and that the President had asked the Prime Minister to step down. I told him that some newspapers could not survive unless "a man bites a dog every day." I told him of the excellent relationship between the Prime Minister and myself and the wide range of subjects which we discussed at our fortnightly meetings. I also said that I candidly expressed my views on all matters but never bothered whether my suggestions were acted upon or not. After all, advice is not command and the duty of the President is only to advise. Kamalapati heartily endorsed my view of the President–Prime Minister relationship and said that he for one could never imagine a situation of confrontation between myself and the Prime Minister.

A Tamil journalist wanted to interview me about my personal life and daily routine. I politely refused, saying that I never project myself, or reveal my personal life.

At that time, the Finance Secretary, S. Venkitaramanan, and the Secretary, Banking, Bimal Jalan, explained to me the crunch in resources and added that the Prime Minister had asked them to consult me with regard to some of these issues. We discussed certain measures and I made a few

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

suggestions. It is not proper to disclose them in these memoirs but I am mentioning this here to show the level of consultations that prevailed between the Prime Minister and myself.

On September 27, I paid an official visit to Jammu and Kashmir. This being my first visit as President, a ceremonial guard of honour was presented. The Governor, Jagmohan, the Chief Minister, Farooq Abdullah, Cabinet Ministers and other important leaders were present. The Raj Bhavan in Srinagar is located on the slope of a hill surrounded by pine trees and the most fragrant and delicate flowers imaginable. In the afternoon there was a civic reception at the Shalimar Gardens. Autumn is really the best time to be in Kashmir. The chinar leaves change colour and compete with the glorious colours of the abundant flowers in full bloom. The scenery was truly breathtaking and in my address I paid tributes to the land and the people of Kashmir. I recalled the lines of Sir Francis Younghusband on Kashmir,

> Who that has heard of it
> Has not pined to go there?
> Who that has gone there again
> Has not wished to remain there forever.

I also referred to the exquisite beauty of the snowbound cave-shrine of Amarnath, consecrated by Adi Sankara himself. Talking about Indian unity I said Kashmir is admired by the rest of India not only for its scenic beauty, but also for its wonderful arts and crafts, not to mention music, poetry and delectable cuisine. I cautioned the people against resort to violence and appealed to them to recapture the spirit of unity and national purpose which marked our great struggle for freedom. I said that every effort should be made to resist divisive forces and to strengthen national unity. I recalled how Adi Sankara had travelled from Kerala to

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Kashmir and held theological disputations with great Sanskrit scholars such as Mandana Mishra. The temple at the top of the Shankaracharya Hill in Srinagar bears testimony to the cultural unity of India. I concluded by referring to the great contribution made by Kashmiris — the Nehrus, Saprus, Katjus, to mention the most prominent — to India's development and the invaluable contribution made by Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah towards national integration.

On September 28, I went to Leh where I addressed the troops stationed there. I told them that they were a shining example of national integration and that jawans hailing from different regions, with different traditions and speaking different languages, were living together as one family inspired by one thought — the defence of the country. I eulogised their patriotism and courage while facing extremes of climate and keeping constant vigil. I reminded them that India does not covet others' territories nor aspire for leadership of the region and that it stands committed to the resolution of all international disputes through peaceful negotiations. But at the same time India cannot and will not be complacent nor relax its vigil.

After the address I had tea with the jawans and all wanted to shake hands with me. It was no ordinary task to shake hands with one thousand five hundred jawans! I then realised how wise our ancients were in adopting the salutation with folded hands (*namaste*) instead of the Western pattern of shaking hands.

In the afternoon, the Ladakhi people held a civic reception in which their representatives pleaded for recognition of the Ladakhis as Scheduled Tribes. I felt that there was justification for their demand. The Ladakhis had nothing in common with either the people of the Valley or the people of Jammu. I felt that they had a good claim for being given a separate status as a Union Territory or a hill area. On my return to Delhi I mentioned their aspirations to Rajiv Gandhi.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

We returned to Srinagar on September 29. Jagmohan hosted a dinner for us where Srinagar's elite was present. But our conversation was very superficial with everyone pretending that all was well in the State. They avoided discussing the undercurrents of violence and terrorism and the sullen discontent of the people.

On September 30, I delivered the convocation address at Kashmir University. It was a colourful ceremony and each of the dignitaries had to wear a turban. Delivering the convocation address I pointed out that the diversity of our nation was an asset and not a liability and that co-existence of several religious faiths, distinctive customs and manners, languages and cultural mores added to the beauty of India. I also referred to the economic development after Independence and said that while it was impressive it was not adequate for the growing population. I finally appealed to the students to achieve excellence in their respective areas.

Back in Delhi on October 2, members of my family and I went to Rajghat and paid homage to the memory of the Father of the Nation. This was also the birth anniversary of another illustrious son of India, Lal Bahadur Shastri, and we offered flowers at his *samadhi* also. Strangely, October 2 is also the death anniversary of one of the greatest patriots of India, K. Kamaraj. Panditji once said of Kamaraj, "It was a tribute to Indian democracy that a person without any advantage of birth, wealth and education could rise to the position of a national leader." My association with Kamaraj was very close and I cannot think of him even now without a lump in my throat. We garlanded his statue on Dupleix Road which has since been renamed Kamaraj Marg.

On October 3, the Prime Minister made his fortnightly call. He explained to me the measures taken to alleviate the distress caused by drought and the latest developments in Sri Lanka. While discussing the Bofors enquiry being conducted by the Joint Parliamentary Committee I

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

suggested that a public notice may be issued inviting evidence from Indian and foreign sources on the deal, so that the Swedish Radio and the lawyer Ram Jethmalani might tender whatever information they had on the matter. Rajiv was quite receptive to the suggestion.

On October 4, the Vice-President, Shankar Dayal Sharma, made his fortnightly call. Earlier as Chairman of the Rajya Sabha I had referred to the Public Accounts Committee the propriety of certain excise and customs notifications issued on the eve of the budget. He wanted to know what my views were on the issue. I told him that we should adhere to the well established position that while these notifications were not illegal they should nevertheless be avoided on the eve of the budget. He also discussed some routine matters relating to the proceedings in the Rajya Sabha.

I was honoured by the visit of the veteran Congress leader, Umashankar Dixit, who dropped by one day for a chat. After complimenting me on my election as President, he reminded me of an incident that occurred ten years earlier, at the time of the merger of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee with the Congress (I). I had apparently called on him at the Raj Bhavan, Madras, and had supported the merger. He recalled that he asked me whether I would take up any position in the Congress organisation or in the Government and that I replied, "I would prefer not to accept anything as it would be misinterpreted that my support for the merger was for personal benefit." Dixit said that this decision of mine had carried me right up to the highest position and that I was now ensconced in Rashtrapati Bhavan. He said that when he reported this incident to Indira Gandhi she was deeply impressed with my attitude.

Dixit spent nearly two delightful hours with me but at home his daughter-in-law Sheila Dixit got worried that he had not returned. When she rang up Rashtrapati Bhavan, she was told that there was no one with the President and

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

that everyone had left. This is an indication of the efficiency of the Rashtrapati Bhavan staff. I have noticed that the Rashtrapati Bhavan staff is very efficient when it comes to observing the closing hours of working days and in observing holidays!

The Swedish Ambassador, Edelstam, made his farewell call. I had known him for some years. He said that for putting through international transactions it was necessary to have a liaison office to answer queries, to offer explanations and to make counter-proposals, to the relevant parties. He said that what appeared to be an usually large remuneration to one country was not necessarily so to other countries which dealt in billions of dollars. He did not mention the Bofors transaction nor anything about the commission alleged to have been paid by the company.

Defence Minister K.C. Pant was an important visitor who briefed me about significant defence matters. He told me that many of the items I had ordered during my time as Defence Minister were being received. He mentioned the supply of R.E. patrol boats, MI-26 helicopters which had the capacity to carry two tanks and fly at high altitudes, the MIG-29 fighter planes and a few other items. He said that MIG-29 was a very valuable acquisition as it incorporated the state-of-the-art in combat aircraft technology. Then I told him the story about the supply of MIG-29 by the Soviet Union. When Indira Gandhi went to Moscow to attend Brezhnev's funeral she asked me if there was any important matter to be taken up with the Soviet Union. I mentioned to her that she could ask for the MIG-29 which, according to reports, was more than a match for the F-16. When Indira Gandhi raised the matter with Marshal Ustinov, Defence Minister of USSR, he dismissed it saying, "Madam, you read all Western journals and ask me to produce these fighter planes." Later, in early December 1983, I had to make up my mind with regard to the exercise of the option for the manufacture of Mirage 2000

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

under licence from France. I called the Soviet Ambassador, Yuri Voronstov, and told him that if the Soviet Union did not have MIG-29, I had no alternative but to go in for other suppliers although India would prefer MIG-29, if available. Vorontsov returned after three weeks with a typed statement saying that taking into consideration the deep and abiding friendship between India and the Soviet Union, they agreed to India manufacturing MIG-29 under licence from the Soviet Union. I was thrilled and I rushed with that letter to Indira Gandhi. She asked me, "What kind of people are these Soviets who said that they have no such thing as MIG-29 in October and agree to their manufacture in India by December of the same year?"

We then discussed the progress of manufacture of missiles in India for which I had created a special cell. Pant said that it was proceeding very satisfactorily but he was meeting a lot of resistance from leaders of opposition groups in Orissa over location of the firing range at Balasore.

On October 18, the Vice-President made his fortnightly call. He said that the noisy zero hour had been revived and that decorum in the House had suffered as a result. But I told him that as he had a good rapport with all sides in the House he should try to persuade the party leaders to cooperate with him in maintaining the dignity of the House of Elders.

On October 21, Bhajan Lal, former Chief Minister of Haryana, met me and complained that his successor, Devi Lal, was instigating a number of people to file criminal cases against him and that there was no protection for the former Chief Minister. This practice of each succeeding Ministry setting up a commission of enquiry against the former Chief Minister is quite contrary to the spirit of democracy. While specific cases can be brought against any person including the Chief Minister, a roving enquiry against a former Chief Minister can only bring in its wake bitterness and disharmony in the functioning of democracy itself.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Unfortunately, democracy in India is degenerating into party warfare. For a healthy democracy every succeeding Ministry should realise that government is continuous and that no witch hunt should be launched against the predecessor Government, unless matters of vital national concerns are involved.

Rajesh Pilot, Minister of State for Transport, considered the blue-eyed boy of Rajiv Gandhi, came to see me on October 21. Being in the same age group as Rajiv, they discussed things more freely than Rajiv Gandhi and I could. Rajiv Gandhi used to send him on missions to Kashmir, Nagaland and Mizoram. Rajesh Pilot is honest and sincere and always executed the assigned tasks competently. If sometimes he did not succeed in persuading Rajiv Gandhi, it was because Rajiv had other backstage operators who were more influential than Pilot. On this occasion he came to consult me on strengthening the party organisation. I told him that interaction between the party and the Government should be strengthened, that the Working Committee should meet every month and thrash out national issues, that the AICC should meet once every six months and hear non-official views instead of delivering sermons to them and that the general session of the Congress should be held once a year as was done in pre-Independence days. I added that the AICC sessions provided an opportunity for the members to meet and come to know each other. The absence of such periodic interaction and contact had led to the isolation of the active party members belonging to other parts of India. I also recalled how Panditji used to encourage younger participants at the AICC session.

Deepavali, the festival of lights, fell this year on October 22. Usually on this day, the staff of Rashtrapati Bhavan with their families greet the President and the First Lady, then various associations assemble on the lawn in groups and offer felicitations. A large number of callers from the general

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

public also greet the President. But on this occasion there was a shoot-out in Delhi by terrorists in which nine people died. I therefore cancelled all entertainment and the reception. In a message on that occasion I stated, "Wanton killing of persons engaged in an act of worship is a crime against all that is sacred in life .... I join fellow citizens in mourning the loss of precious lives and in the spilling of innocent blood. Let us respond to this outrage not by impulse or recrimination but with discipline, which is the hallmark of civilisation." Almost all leaders of political parties condemned this outrage. This gesture of mine in cancelling the Deepavali reception was greatly appreciated.

On October 23, some members of the Parsi community had tea with me in Rashtrapati Bhavan. I had been under the impression that the Parsi community was very rich and that they were all industrialists like the legendary Tatas. It came as a rude shock when they explained that there were many poor Parsis living on charity. They bemoaned the fact that the preference they used to enjoy in recruitment during the pre-Independence days had vanished and that many of them were struggling for survival. I told them that the richer members of the community should help the weaker sections to start small industries and find self-employment.

About this time I started considering the action to be taken on the controversial Postal Bill. The former President, Giani Zail Singh, publicly stated that he hoped that his successor would not clear the controversial Bill, though Zail Singh himself could have either withheld assent or returned the Bill for reconsideration during his term. I thought the best course would be to seek the opinion of the Attorney-General on the entire Bill.

On his return from the Vancouver Commonwealth Summit, Rajiv Gandhi called on me on October 26 and briefed me in detail about his tour. He said that he had fruitful talks with Commonwealth leaders including the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Canadian Prime Minister, Brian Mulrooney, the British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, and the Zimbabwe President, Robert Mugabe. He also said that his meeting with the Japanese Prime Minister, Nakasone, and the Dutch Prime Minister, Lubbers, related to improving economic cooperation with those two countries. He was happy that India was heard with respect in the international fora and that India's advice was sought on many issues.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

6

The Governors' conference is one of the major ceremonial events at Rashtrapati Bhavan. The Governors and Lieutenant-Governors look forward to it as an occasion to meet each other and put forth their assessment of the situation in their respective States and Union Territories as well as bring to the gathering's attention other issues relating to their office. In the past, the Governors' conference used to be held annually but later, at the suggestion of Indira Gandhi, these conferences were held every two years.

The conference starts with a photo session of the Governors with the President, the Vice-President and the Prime Minister. The principle of seniority in office is strictly observed in all its proceedings. The seniormost Governor acts as the doyen and generally represents the Governors as a group with regard to issues relating to their office and perquisites.

The last Governors' conference had been held in 1985. I therefore wanted the biennial conference to be held before the end of 1987. So I initiated steps to hold the conference in October 1987.

In the customary address by the President, I said, "Governors play an important role in the affairs of their respective States. The ship of state has to cross stormy rapids

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

and it is the responsibility of the helmsman and the head of the government to navigate those rapids. The duty of the Governor as the head of the State is to provide the steadying support of a ballast." About their relationship with the governments of the States I said that Governors should remember the central fact that they are not only constitutional heads but are also expected to be sagacious counsellors and advisers to the Ministry who can pour oil on troubled waters.

Referring to the law and order situation I said, "Law and order, as you are all aware, is a State subject; yet the Centre has an overall responsibility to provide necessary and appropriate help to the States. Therefore a greater mutuality is clearly needed." I then referred to the vast scope for gubernatorial help in socio-economic spheres like the implementation of schemes for the benefit of the less privileged sections of society, control of population, schemes for adult education and literacy and employment generation programmes.

I referred to the historic agreement signed between India and Sri Lanka which reiterated India's commitment to the territorial integrity and unity of Sri Lanka but at the same time safeguarded the rights of the Tamils in the Northern and Eastern provinces to enjoy a considerable degree of autonomy in areas like law and order, land, education and culture.

I had been unhappy with the Governors frequently visiting Delhi for ostensibly public purposes but in reality to attend to their private business or to meet the powers that be. Very often they have to return without being able to meet dignitaries like the Prime Minister. I had also observed that Governors often undertook tours to the States other than their own to participate in small and inconsequential functions. I drew their attention to the need to exercise a

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

certain measure of restraint in the matter of tours undertaken. In my address I quoted former President Sanjiva Reddy's views in the matter (which were the same as mine) and exhorted them to tour more intensively their own States and reduce their visits to other States. Though I did not put it down explicitly, I wanted to curb the practice of a Governor going to his home State frequently and take part in local politics. I also wanted to ensure that the position of a Governor was not diminished by bringing a Governor from another State to preside over public functions.

S.M.H. Burney, doyen of the Governors, initiated discussion after thanking the President for the address. After reviewing the law and order situation in Punjab he pleaded that the Governors' conference be held annually instead of once in two years.

The seating arrangement in the Governors' conference follows the seniority principle and the Governors and Lieutenant-Governors have to speak in that order. The whole day was taken up by the Governors of various States presenting pictures of the law and order situation in their States, the problems of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes as well as items of particular concern to their States. The Vice-President, the Prime Minister, Home Minister, Agriculture Minister and the civil servants remained at the conference throughout the day, adding weight and seriousness to the meeting. I hosted a dinner that night for the Governors and their spouses at which the Vice-President, the Prime Minister and his Cabinet colleagues attended. Unlike the usual state banquet there was an atmosphere of bonhomie.

The Governors' conference continued the next day. The Prime Minister, who addressed the conference on the second day, stated that the Sarkaria Commission Report on Centre-State Relations would be studied with utmost care and that

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

efforts should be made to strengthen the nation as a whole. Referring to communal violence in several States Rajiv Gandhi emphasised the need to intervene effectively at the initial stages of the outbreak of violence and to curb the misuse of religious platforms and organisations. While presenting a sanguine picture of the Indian economy he cautioned the Governors against complacency. The main theme of the speeches by the Governors was the disturbing growth of religious fundamentalism and the need to divert people's attention to social and cultural issues.

Summing up the conference proceedings, I appealed to the Governors to extend cooperation to neighbouring States, to exercise vigilance on conflicts arising from linguistic issues between States and to personally look into the issues of flood and drought relief. I also accepted the Governors' suggestion to hold the Governors' conference annually to their great satisfaction. Thus the Governors' conference ended on a very pleasant and cordial note.

October 31, 1987, was the third anniversary of Indira Gandhi's martyrdom. My wife and I went to Shakti Sthal and paid homage to the departed leader. Later we proceeded to No.1 Safdarjung Road, which has been converted into the Indira Gandhi Memorial and attended the programme of *bhajans*. Indira Gandhi was one of the most dynamic Prime Ministers that India had had. She had been a unique personality. She was a perfectionist and accepted nothing but the best. She was impatient with mediocrity. She not only preached but also practised excellence in everything she did. She reached the pinnacle of her political career at the time of her courageous action during the Bangladesh crisis. In a single stroke she erased the ignominy of the 1962 debacle and raised the prestige of India in the world. The emergency interregnum tarnished her, giving her the image of a dictator. She was misled into a totally unnecessary and unwarranted

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

action by her closest advisers. Though I was one of the opponents of the emergency, I did not join any of the opposition parties, preferring to remain politically dormant. An objective assessment of her will have to await the passage of time.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

7

In my long official career, considerations of region, religion, community, caste or language have never influenced my thoughts. I have always chosen officials for their ability, efficiency and integrity. However, a scribe hinted in his paper that I wanted to appoint a person of my own choice in a key post in the President's Secretariat, and that the Secretary to the former President Zail Singh, S. Varadan (IAS), had come "under a cloud" as Giani's man. Such reckless and distorted presentations are increasingly becoming the rule rather than the exception.

At the time I became President, Varadan was the Secretary to the President. My predecessor, Giani Zail Singh, appointed him to this office. He was a very knowledgeable and efficient officer and since he came from the Home Ministry, he was familiar with the work connected with the office of the President. His tenure ended in November 1987. I requested him to continue in the post but he preferred to revert to an administrative Ministry. So I started looking out for a replacement. Earlier when I was a minister, Prem Kumar (IAS) was working in the Prime Minister's Secretariat and had met me several times and discussed a number of issues. Later, Prem Kumar became Secretary in the Ministry of Commerce. He had pleasing manners and was a stickler for protocol, rules and regulations. I recommended his name to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi for the post of Secretary to President which the Prime Minister accepted.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

One of the annual functions at Rashtrapati Bhavan is the inauguration of the sale of UNICEF greeting cards and calendars, the proceeds of which are utilised for improving the lot of the less privileged and needy children all over the world. At this inauguration, Saroj Khaparde, Minister for Women, Welfare and Sports, made a short speech emphasising the need for support to the less privileged children.

During my term as Vice-President I had suggested to the Health Ministry to adopt the immunisation programme sponsored by UNICEF and provide immunisation facilities to infants. It had been accepted by the then Minister for Health, Mohsina Kidwai.

In my inaugural address I referred to the immunisation programme and urged its extension throughout the country. I also pleaded for special care of the handicapped children. The publicity arising from this function always gave a fillip to the sale of greeting cards in India which I am told was quite sizable.

On November 6, the President of the World Bank, Conable, and his officers called on me. He recalled my association with the Fund-Bank and negotiating a five billion SDR loan for India. He said he was deeply impressed with the prudent borrowing policy of the Government of India and the recent measures to accelerate the development of industries in the country. It had always been my view that multilateral financial agencies helped export promotion of the developed countries. Therefore I was not surprised when Conable emphasised the need for India to liberalise imports. I had never seen these agencies tendering this advice to the developed countries. I pointed out to Conable that the growing protectionism among the developed countries in effect accentuated the problems of the developing countries.

I also referred to the increasing debt burden of all developing countries and their inability to meet even the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

servicing charges. Conable responded by saying that this aspect was very much before them, and that the debt issue would figure in the Fund-Bank discussions.

The Old Boys Association of Aligarh Muslim University usually organises a talk and dinner in honour of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, the founder of the University. I was invited to deliver the memorial lecture. I paid rich tributes to Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and also cautioned against divisive and communal forces trying to weaken the unity of the country.

There was, however, some unpleasantness associated with this function. After I had agreed to attend the dinner, I received a number of letters stating that the group that had invited me was not representative of the organisation and that I should not attend the function. I consulted Dr. Kidwai, Chancellor of the University. He said that normally he would like me to keep away from controversy but if I had accepted the invitation I should honour the commitment. He said he would also be present at the function.

Two days before the meeting, security officials told the organisers that the campus where the lecture and dinner were organised had not been cleared from the security angle and that the venue should be shifted. Imagine the predicament of the organisers who were told to make changes and incur expenses, without any consideration for their difficulties. When informed of this, I told the organisers that I would send them the text of my speech which someone could read at the function and thus save themselves from the dilemma. But the organisers did not agree as they felt that the rival faction would consider the function a total failure. The organisers frantically searched for an appropriate venue and found that a meeting fixed for that day at the India International Centre, New Delhi, was scheduled to be concluded at 8 p.m. and that the Sir Syed Lecture could begin at 8.30 p.m. So I went to the meeting at 8.30 p.m. and

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

delivered the address. I paid tributes to Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, stating that he was an outstanding social reformer of his time and combined the best of old traditions with the best in modernity. I also emphasised his belief that the two principal communities of India, Hindus and Muslims, could live in concord and not in conflict with each other.

I later discovered to my dismay that security officials had blocked the traffic for half an hour and caused a great deal of unnecessary inconvenience. In fact, one person wrote to me that he could not leave the India International Centre since security had prevented any movement at the Centre. I felt annoyed but helpless. Thereafter, I scrupulously declined all invitations to functions at the India International Centre. I also exercised a similar restraint with regard to programmes at the Teen Murti House. Several times I had taken up the matter with the Military Secretary but was always confronted with the Blue Book regulations. From that time I restricted my movements in Delhi to government or government sponsored functions, causing considerable disappointment to non-official organisers.

On November 5, the Sri Lankan President, Jayewardene and his wife came to stay with us at Rashtrapati Bhavan. They were on their way back from the SAARC meeting at Kathmandu. Apart from having discussions with the Prime Minister, President Jayewardene had a frank talk with me for half an hour. Following the Rajiv-Jayewardene agreement, Sri Lanka made proposals for devolution of powers to the new North and East province which apparently even the moderates in Sri Lanka considered inadequate.

Amirthalingam and Sivachidambaram of the Tamil United Liberation Front had earlier met me as well as the Prime Minister and other officials and expressed their disappointment over the Sri Lanka proposals. When I mentioned this to President Jayewardene, he said that these

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

issues could be further discussed but the most urgent need was to establish peace in the area. I explained to him that India had already made its position clear on the issue and that it wanted the LTTE to surrender arms, abjure violence and agree to implement the peace agreement between India and Sri Lanka.

I understood from Rajiv Gandhi later that he had said the same thing to him and that the Government of India would not consider any peace or cease-fire until the LTTE surrendered its arms. I found that though many of these visits were ceremonial they helped both parties to understand and appreciate each other's point of view and to clear wrong impressions.

Despite my repeated requests to the Governors of States to keep themselves above party politics and avoid visiting their home States too often, Vasant Rao Patil, the former Chief Minister of Maharashtra, paid scant respect to these exhortations. Patil went to Bombay on three weeks' leave from October 8 and was reported to have held meetings with the Maharashtra legislators, trying to destabilise the S.B. Chavan Ministry. He now applied for extension of his leave for another week and according to press reports had decided to relinquish office by November 15. Though I was tempted to pull him up I desisted from any action in view of his impending resignation.

The Chief Justice of India, Justice Pathak, and his wife came over one evening for tea. Justice Pathak is a serious, objective and mild-mannered gentleman who carries out his responsibilities with dignity. He candidly discussed many questions relating to the judiciary such as the mounting arrears in courts, the delay in appointment of judges and the expanding area of writ jurisdiction. I pointed out that the liberal admission of writ petitions, even when alternative remedies were available, was cluttering up the work of the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

higher judiciary. I also expressed my reservations about the liberal use of public interest litigation. Justice Pathak agreed with me that there was a need to be more selective about admissions and that he himself was not happy at the spate of public interest litigations.

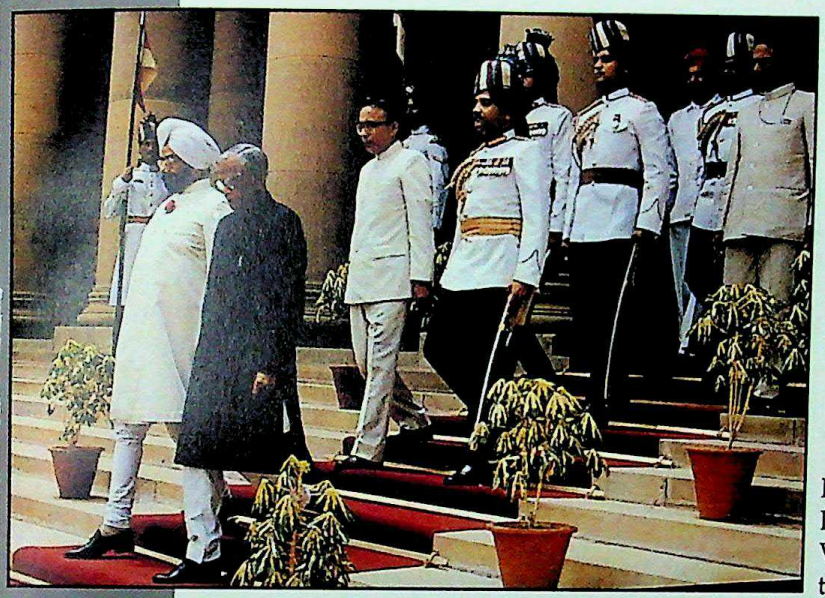
The Governor of Andhra Pradesh, Kumudben Joshi, called on me about this time, and poured her heart out against the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister. She was on a collision course with N.T. Rama Rao. Actually P.Upendra, Member of Parliament and leader of the Telugu Desam Party, came with three other members of the party and complained that Kumudben Joshi was on a path of confrontation with the Chief Minister and that she functioned more like a Congress Opposition leader than as Governor. It is true that Kumudben Joshi toured the State extensively and organised a host of social welfare activities in the name of Red Cross or Mahila Sabha and so on. But I was not sure that she was doing anything directly against the Chief Minister. However, I advised her to maintain better relations with the Chief Minister and the Cabinet.

Countess Patricia, Lord Mountbatten's daughter, along with her sons Philip and Timothy and her niece named India Hicks were special guests, who paid a visit during this period. They went around the President's Estate, the resplendent halls and the Moghul Gardens and came back entranced. During tea, they talked nostalgically of their days in the Viceregal Lodge and the grand role played by Lord Mountbatten in the transfer of power. They said they were happy that the old edifice had not been changed but had been maintained more or less as it was.

Soon after, the Rajya Sabha felicitated Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma on his assumption of the office of Chairman of the Rajya Sabha. Rich tributes were paid to his erudition, objectivity and uprightness. *The Times of India* carried a

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

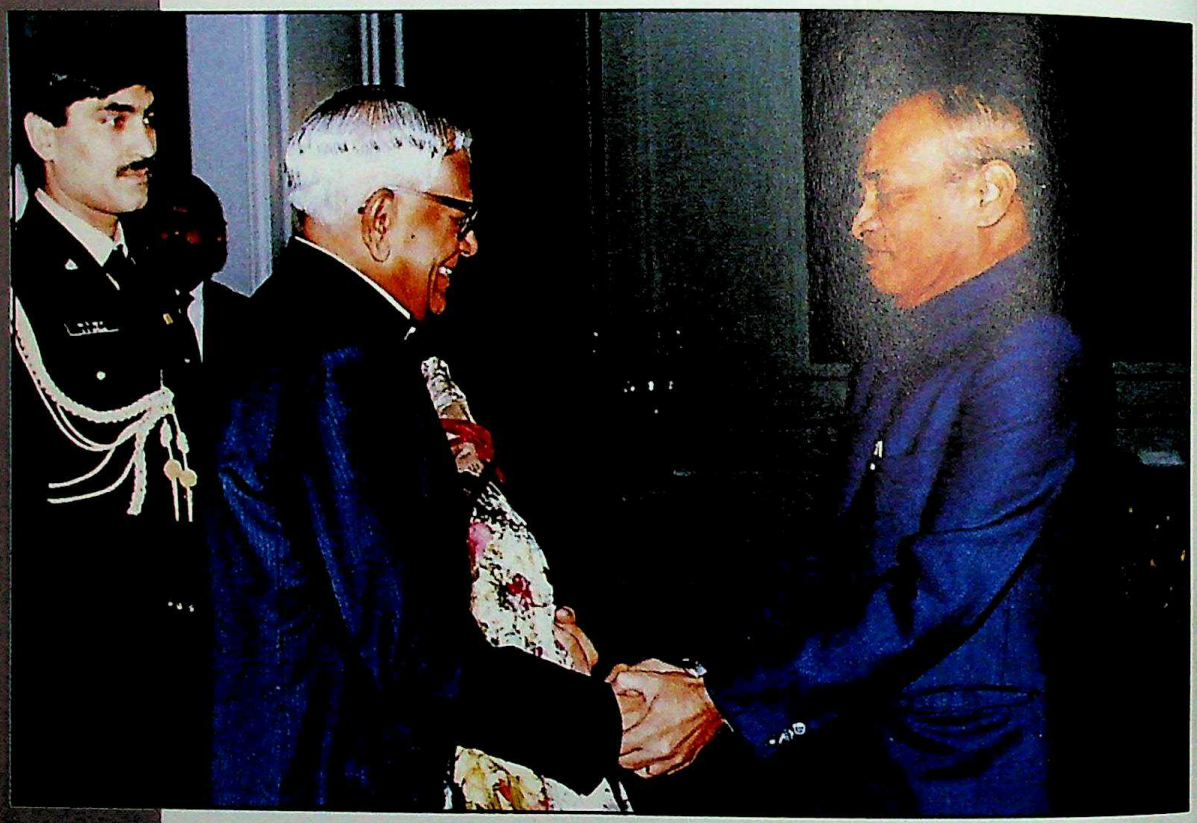


President Zail Singh and President-elect Venkataraman proceeding to the swearing-in ceremony.

Former Chief Justice Pathak and former President Zail Singh congratulating President Venkataraman.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu



President congratulating Narasimha Rao on his election as Leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

With Rajiv Gandhi.

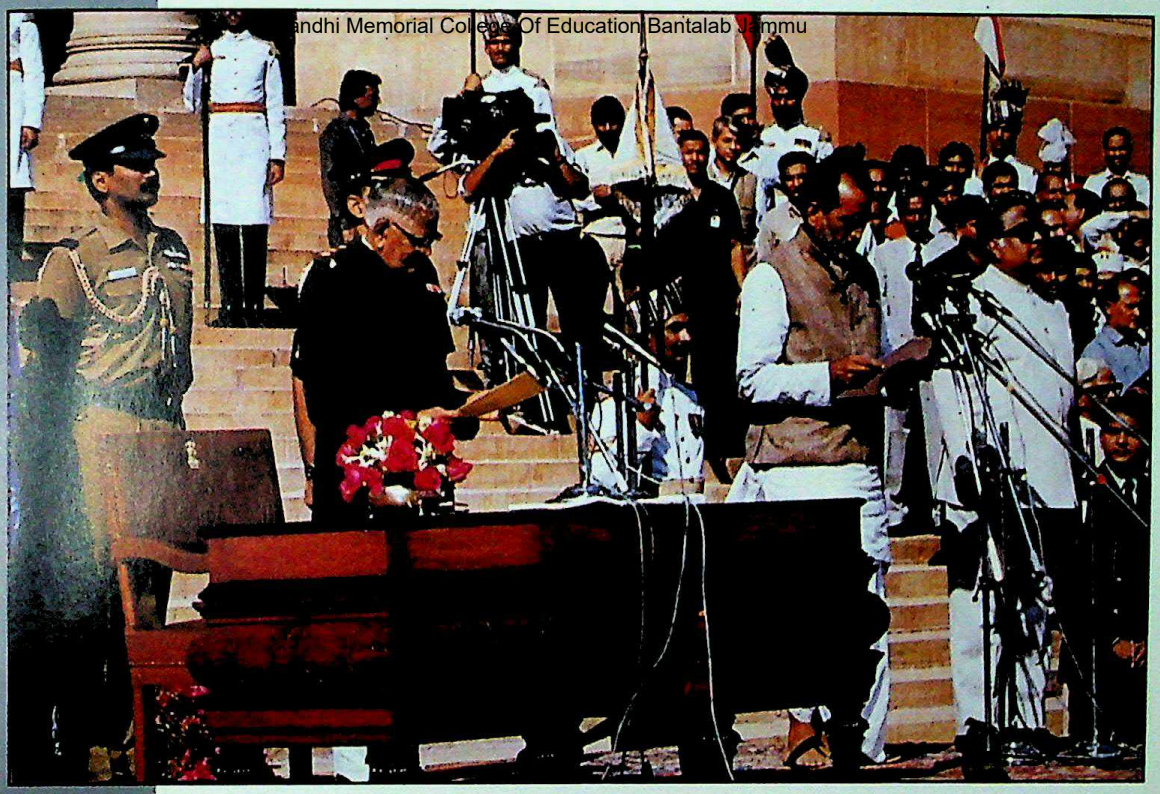
CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Sonia Gandhi receiving the Bharat Ratna Award to Rajiv Gandhi.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

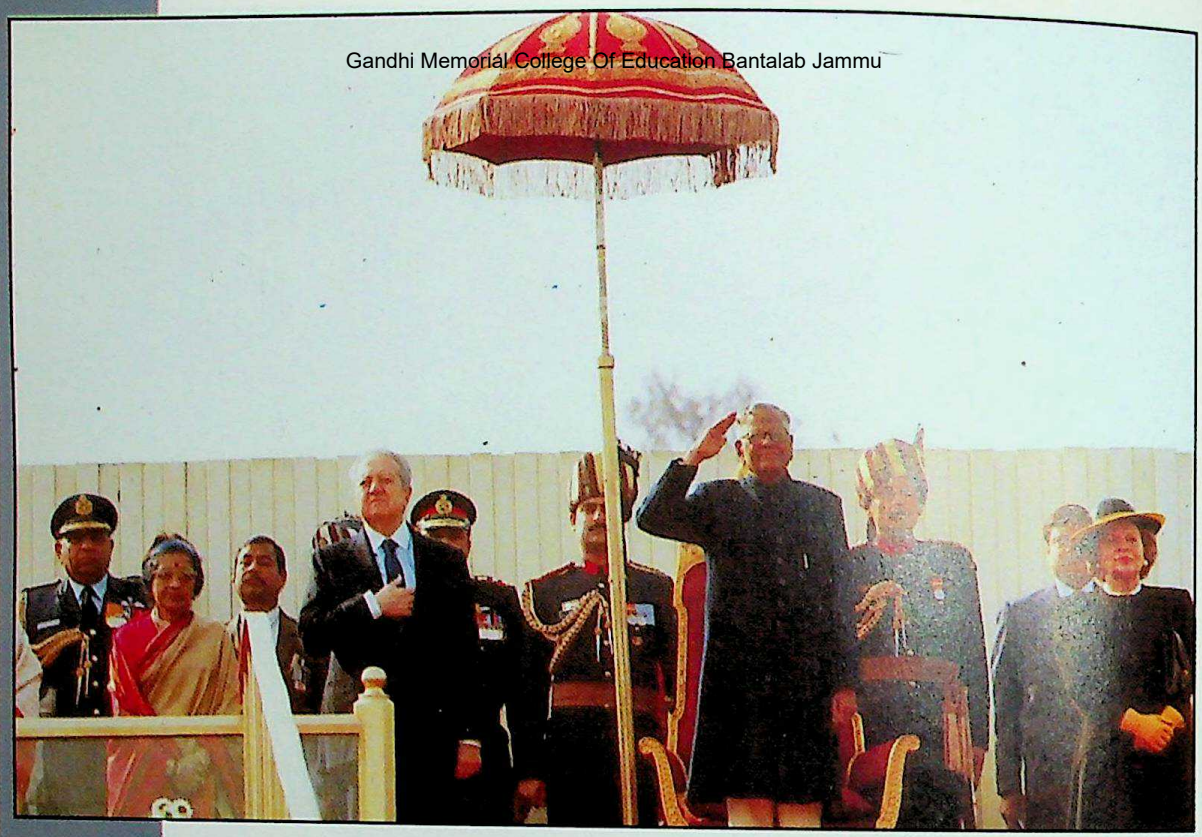


top: Swearing in Chandra Shekhar as Prime Minister.

below: Proceeding to the Joint Session of Parliament (21.12.91).

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu



top: At the Republic Day Parade with the Chief Guest, President of Portugal (26.1.92).
below: With Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit (Second from right).

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

report from which I quote: "Several members took this opportunity for praising Dr. Sharma's predecessor, Mr. R.Venkataraman, again. They appreciated his deft handling of the House. P. Upendra (T.D.) was eager to share his secrets. The Opposition leaders had developed such a good understanding with him (Mr. R.Venkataraman), that they would give him prior information about their plans for walkouts and noisy scenes in the House." It is true that because of my rapport with the Opposition leaders in the Rajya Sabha, many unpleasant and ugly scenes were avoided.

On November 8, the Vice-President paid his usual fortnightly call. He had succeeded me as Chairman of the Jury for the Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi Awards. He wanted to know whether any proposals had been received in respect of these awards. I mentioned to him that the name of General Secretary Gorbachev of the Soviet Union was on the top for consideration of the Indira Gandhi Award for 1988 and that the names of Willy Brandt of Germany and Fenner Brockway of the U.K., an old friend of India, were also under consideration for the Jawaharlal Nehru Award. Dr. Sharma agreed that the names suggested would be welcomed by the public.

P.Upendra and some Telugu Desam Party members called on me and sought my good offices to ensure that the writ jurisdiction of the High Court and Supreme Court was not misused for partisan political purposes. The occasion for such a representation arose out of admission by the Andhra Pradesh High Court of two writ petitions filed by the Organising Secretary of the Congress. The writ petitions sought:

1. Issuance of a direction to the Union Government to appoint a high-power judicial committee under the Commission of Inquiries Act to probe into charges of

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

corruption and abuse of authority by Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao.

2. To prosecute N.T. Rama Rao for violation of the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA) and other tax laws.

Apparently, admission of these writ petitions had shaken the Chief Minister and his Telugu Desam Party. Upendra said that the Congress should fight these battles politically and not through legal subterfuge. I merely heard him and gave the stock reply, 'I shall look into it'. Both of us knew that the President had no powers to interfere in matters within the purview of the judiciary.

November 14 is Nehru's birthday. On this day as I prepared myself for the morning duties, my heart was filled with gratitude for what Nehru had done for me. During my days in Parliament from 1950 to 1957, I was a staunch supporter of Nehru's policies and programmes. When others spoke disparagingly about the Nehru style of planning, I differed and continued to be one of his ardent supporters. In the passing of the Special Marriages Bill of 1954, which Nehru was keen to put on the statute book, I played a prominent role. I moved an amendment to the Bill to provide for divorce by mutual consent on a petition presented to the district court. The district court was to be empowered to declare the marriage dissolved after a stipulated period. There was a good deal of discussion on the subject. Panditji, speaking on the proposal, had this to say (and I quote): "The question that ultimately arises is the question that when two people find it impossible to get on together, whatever the cause, what is to be done about it? I am prepared, if I may say so, to forgive not one lapse but many but I am not prepared to forgive the intolerable position of two persons who hate each other being tied up to each other. Therefore, I welcome this clause here. I welcome particularly the amendment that my colleague, Mr. Venkataraman, is

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

moving on it, in regard to divorce by mutual consent."

In his major thrust of the reform of Hindu law and the passing of the Hindu Code Bill, I had been totally with him. So much so, that I was regarded in those days as a Nehruite.

Nehru sent me to the United Nations General Assembly as a delegate for seven sessions from 1953 to 1961 and I stopped going only when I could not leave the State government for long spells. Whenever there was an obstruction to my industrial schemes I used to go to him directly, ignoring the bureaucrats, and get my plans approved. Once, as Minister for Industries, Madras State, I had invited experts from the then German Democratic Republic (GDR) to come to Madras and examine the feasibility of smelting iron ore from Salem and Neyveli lignite areas. I had earlier written to Nehru that I was going to GDR at the invitation of that government on my way back from one of the U.N. meetings and he had approved. But the Steel Ministry at the Centre was peeved that a minister from one of the States should invite any foreign expert over the head of the Union Ministry concerned and so it withheld permission for issue of the visa to the experts. For some time I was puzzled by the delay until the representative of GDR told me about the situation. I then wrote to Nehru that what I was seeking was a feasibility study and not entering into a contract directly with a foreign government. I also explained that no foreign exchange was involved in the transaction as the Madras government was only meeting local hospitality costs. I think this letter is still in the files of the Tamil Nadu government. Nehru promptly replied asking me to meet him. When I next went to New Delhi I met him at his residence a little before lunch and explained the situation. He grasped the matter in a trice and said he would look into it. He was impressed with my earnestness and dedication to the industrial development of Tamil Nadu. Hardly had I

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

returned to the Tamil Nadu House in New Delhi where I was staying, when the Prime Minister's office telephoned me and said the visa had been cleared. This instance created a deep impression in the Delhi Secretariat and thereafter their response was always positive.

The first thing I did on November 14 morning was to proceed to Shantivan and pay homage to Nehru on his birth anniversary. In the afternoon I agreed to participate in the International Balloon Mela in which many international fliers were expected to participate. The event was a major attraction in the city and there was acute traffic congestion on all roads leading to Safdarjung Airport, venue of the event. The security people tried to clear the road but found it very difficult to do so. When this was reported to me I said that the public should not be inconvenienced and that I would cancel my visit. But the organisers of the mela would not agree and pleaded with the traffic police to somehow try and clear the route. In response I put my foot down firmly and said that even if the road was cleared, I would not attend the function and I cancelled the visit. This is how selfish organisers of functions make senior dignitaries unpopular. It is a pity that in the name of security, the public are put to a great deal of inconvenience and discomfort. The inconvenience to the public caused by security arrangements had often deterred me from accepting many requests for participation in city functions.

On November 16, there were several visitors among whom Dinesh Singh was one. Dinesh Singh was at one time Indira Gandhi's confidant and close adviser. Much later, he moved away to the Janata Party and Rajiv did not accommodate him in any position of responsibility. I had always had a high opinion of Dinesh Singh's competence, initiative and drive. So when Dinesh suggested that I use my good offices for his rehabilitation, I responded sympa-

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

thetically.

Dr. Karan Singh was the next caller. He was a favourite of Indira Gandhi during the Emergency regime. However, he broke with her during her post-Emergency election debacle. He was elected to Parliament in 1980 as a non-Congress member and was sitting in the opposition, when I was Finance Minister and later Defence Minister. He lost his election in 1984 and rejoined the Congress. He was looking for an assignment as India's High Commissioner to London or as India's Ambassador to Washington. He wanted me to take up the Chairmanship of the 1200th anniversary of the philosopher-saint Adi Sankara. I told him that I did not accept Adi Sankara's date of birth as 788 A.D. and that according to the Kanchi Kamakoti Sankaracharyas it was before the birth of Christ and that Dr. Karan Singh should consult the Paramacharya of Kanchi before launching these celebrations. Dr. Karan Singh told me that though he had the deepest regard and respect for the Paramacharya, he did not want to go there as he felt he would be dissuaded from naming the project as the 1200th anniversary of Adi Sankara. I was, however, glad that when the function was eventually held, the problem was resolved by describing it, simply, as Sankara Jayanthi without ascribing dates.

Surjeet Singh Barnala, former Chief Minister of Punjab, came with a delegation to meet me. He wanted that:

1. the Jodhpur detenus be released and that those against whom there was positive evidence should be prosecuted and not detained;
2. Chandigarh be transferred to Punjab in accordance with the Longowal agreement; and
3. action be taken against miscreants in the 1984 post-Indira Gandhi assassination turmoil and compensation expedited for those who had suffered during those disturbances.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

I asked him politely whether anyone could take responsibility for putting down terrorism and restoring normalcy in Punjab if these demands were met. Barnala's response was that no one could take the responsibility of suppressing terrorism but that terrorism would abate if the demands were granted. It was evident that the leaders in Punjab were not only helpless in putting an end to the massacre of innocents but were also aware of their helplessness.

November 19 is Indira Gandhi's birthday. My wife and I paid homage at Shakti Sthal and thereafter went to the Indira Memorial on Safdarjung Road and attended the *bhajan* programme. I also unveiled a life-size portrait of Indira Gandhi in the Central Hall of Parliament. The Vice-President Shankar Dayal Sharma and the Prime Minister also participated. The portrait was drawn by the renowned Russian artist, Svetoslav Roerich. Amidst cheers I said, "Today we are adding to the portrait gallery of the historic Central Hall of Parliament one more illustrious personality who strode like a colossus across the political firmament of India for over a quarter of a century."

I paid tributes to her extraordinary courage in the face of a crisis and referred particularly to her undaunted stand in the liberation of Bangladesh even when the air was thick with rumours of U.S. intervention with their renowned 7th Fleet. I hailed her economic policies such as bank nationalisation, the 20-Point Programme and credit facilities for the rural population. Paying tributes to her global initiatives such as for disarmament, nuclear freeze and a new world economic order, I said that Indira had carved a special niche for herself in contemporary world history. I said she was regarded as a guardian angel of the weaker sections of society, the minorities and other disadvantaged sections such as the blind, the spastic and the handicapped.

In the afternoon, I presented the Indira Gandhi Award

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

for Peace, Disarmament and Development at a glittering ceremony in the Ashoka Hall. The award went to the Parliamentarians for Global Action. This is a worldwide organisation of legislators, committed to the pursuit of disarmament, development and a just international economic order. It has a membership of more than 600 legislators from 36 countries and includes members of different political parties. It was this organisation which initiated the five-continent peace move to break the nuclear deadlock between the Superpowers. The jury for the selection of the award consisted of the Vice-President and eminent international figures, Dr. Nyerere of Tanzania and Dr. El-Zayyat, former Egyptian Foreign Minister.

I was Vice-President and Chairman of the jury when the Parliamentarians for Global Action was chosen for the award. Presenting the award, I said: "Let all of us, irrespective of race, religion, colour or country join together in the great endeavour to banish the cult of war from the face of the earth."

The award was received by R. Crimsson of Ireland, then Chairman of the Parliamentarians for Global Action.

I went to Calcutta on November 20, to open the South Asian Federation Games. After the Asian Games held in Delhi, this was the biggest international games meet. Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Sri Lanka and India participated in the events. It was a sparkling and colourful show with dances, music and drills by schoolchildren who formed shifting mosaic patterns.

Chief Minister Jyoti Basu welcomed the gathering and I formally declared the games meet open. As I drove from the stadium to the airport I was surprised to see large sections of people lining the roads to have a look at me as it was my first visit as President. In these days when people are brought in lorries in order to give a rousing welcome to the leaders, this

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

came as a refreshing contrast.

The next day one of the Members of Parliament from Bengal told me that Calcutta had not seen such a spontaneous crowd in recent times.

On November 21, Ryzhkov, the Soviet Prime Minister, designated in his country as Chairman of the Council of Ministers, called on us at 11 a.m. His wife accompanied him. A pleasant, handsome man, Ryzhkov was fluent in English and spoke without any hesitation. He told me that the Soviet Union was genuinely interested in nuclear disarmament and peace and would go ahead, even unilaterally. He praised India's role in creating a climate for nuclear disarmament through the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the Six Nations Initiative. Commenting on our young Prime Minister, Ryzhkov said that Rajiv Gandhi was full of drive and initiative and that he had carved a place for himself in world affairs.

Ryzhkov had come to India to inaugurate the Soviet cultural pageant. The Soviet Festival got off to a flying start with the inaugural ceremony in the forecourt of Rashtrapati Bhavan and later at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium. I hosted a lunch for Mr. and Mrs. Ryzhkov. It was attended by the Vice-President, Prime Minister, his Cabinet colleagues, representative Members of Parliament, journalists and artists.

Mrs.Ryzhkov, who sat on my right, expressed more interest in the different types of dishes served than in national and international issues. She was particularly pleased with *idli*, the South Indian steamed rice cake, which I had introduced as a regular item in the menu at Rashtrapati Bhavan. She was also fond of flowers and loved the roses which came from Rashtrapati Bhavan's Mughal Gardens.

On November 23, I hosted a dinner for Admiral Tahiliani who was retiring as Chief of the Naval Staff. I had introduced

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

the practice of hosting a dinner or lunch for the retiring Chiefs of Defence Services. I invited for these occasions not only the Chiefs of Staff of the other Services but also the incoming Chief and retired Chiefs of the Defence services. It was a family dinner in which the defence personnel and their spouses participated. The new Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Nadkarni, was also present. This provided me an opportunity to hear the views of the past Chiefs of Staff on many current problems.

In the little theatre in the Rashtrapati Bhavan basement, the Tamil film *Nayakan*, a pale imitation of Francis Ford Coppola's *Godfather*, was screened when the popular Southern actor, Kamalahasan was also present at the screening. Kamalahasan's acting in the film was superb but I dislike violence in films as there is enough of it in life.

On November 24, Dr. Johannes Rau, the Prime Minister of North Rhine-Westphalia, a Federal unit of West Germany paid a courtesy call. I drew his attention to the similarity in the name Rau between India and his country. I also recalled that about twenty-five years back as Minister of Industries of the then Madras State I had invited Heinrich Rau from GDR and asked him if there was any special reason for using the surname Rau by the Germans. Dr. Rau, however, said there was no significance in it.

In the evening I attended the Soviet ballet which was a part of the Soviet Festival at the Siri Fort auditorium. The Soviet ballet has a very large number of participants on the stage and the auditorium had to be expanded to accommodate the ballet group. But on this occasion, even the enlarged auditorium was found to be insufficient. The Soviet ballet as usual was superb with delicate movements and enrapturing music.

The Russian circus was part of the USSR Festival in India. In my view, the circus was superior to the Russian ballet. I

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

had witnessed in the Soviet Union a sparkling display of the circus depicting cosmonauts and space walk. Here in India they could not bring their best owing to constraints of space and other infrastructure.

On November 25, Captain Amrinder Singh of the princely hierarchy of Patiala and now a member of the Punjab Legislative Assembly, came to see me with five other MLAs. He was critical of the Government of India and its way of handling the Punjab situation. He repeated the same demands — release of Jodhpur detenus, transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab, etc. He had left the Congress and projected himself as an Akali leader. I was not sure of his influence either with the Akalis or with the people of Punjab so I merely heard him without responding.

On November 26, Defence Minister K.C. Pant had an hour-long discussion with me on defence projects. I suggested to him that the Main Battle Tank which I had named Arjun as Defence Minister could be put on display during the Republic Day parade. I emphasised the need for strengthening our relationship with the Soviet Union as they were our main defence suppliers. I also cautioned him against accepting the Soviet offer of sending their experts for our air defence programmes.

The surviving members of the Constituent Assembly came to tea. Old veterans like Nijalingappa, R.R Diwakar, N.C. Ranga, Himmatsingka and Renuka Roy were among them. They pleaded that members of the Constituent Assembly should be provided with a scale of pension irrespective of the length of service and free railway passes, like the sitting members of Parliament, and other facilities. I have never been impressed with the idea that a person should get a pension (whatever it be) before the pensionable age of sixty years. In the United Nations, the staff who had put in five years and more of service are eligible for pension but only on

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

their attaining the superannuation age of 60. To give a person a pension at the age of 30 is a contradiction in terms. The idea that a person should get a pension for life for a mere membership of legislature for even one year never appealed to me.

The Nepalese parliamentary delegation called on me on November 27. They talked about Indo-Nepal friendship and cooperation and wanted India to finance some of the hydro-electric projects in Nepal. This is a subject which had been under discussion even from the days when I was Finance Minister but had never made any progress.

The Chief Minister of Assam, Prafulla Mahanta, invited me to participate in the Shankara Deva festival at Gauhati. We had been good friends since the days we were negotiating the Assam issue. After Rajiv Gandhi became the Prime Minister, the Assam accord was signed and elections to the Assam State Assembly were held. The All Assam Students Union and the Ganatantra Parishad representatives won a majority of seats in the Assam State Assembly and Prafulla Mahanta who was leader of the AASU became Chief Minister. Moving from a violent agitator to an effective administrator is no easy transition. But Mahanta had proved himself to be as good an administrator as an agitator. He had sobriety, balance, an unoffending manner of speaking and a quick grasp of the intricacies of administration. The way he was handling the vociferous group within his party and taking practical decisions deeply impressed me.

That evening Sonal Mansingh gave a dance recital at the Rashtrapati Bhavan theatre. There was an elite audience of Cabinet Ministers, Chief Justices, past and present, and a few former diplomats. They were in my list of permanent invitees. These cultural programmes were eagerly looked forward to by a group who normally could not attend public performances.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

The Prime Minister made his fortnightly call on November 28. The air was rife with rumours of a Cabinet reshuffle. But the Prime Minister spoke about the situation in Punjab, Sri Lanka and Darjeeling (where the Gorkha National Liberation Front was agitating for an autonomous region.) He did not raise the subject of Cabinet reorganization nor did I suggest it.

On November 30, Arun Nehru dropped in for a chat. He was in two minds: on the one hand he wanted a reconciliation with Rajiv and on the other, he seemed defiant and obdurate. He said that he had fraternal affection for Rajiv and that he would stand by and help him in every situation. At the same time he hinted that he was in possession of information which could prove explosive to Rajiv's government. He was critical of Rajiv's new advisers. I listened to him with sympathy but without any response.

The Rajasthan 'Sati' Prevention Bill (1987) was pending before me for assent. The Bill provides for a heavier punishment for attempt to commit 'Sati', any abetment of 'Sati' and punishment for glorification of 'Sati'. Surprisingly, a group of people supporting this heinous practice of 'Sati' had gone to court and had challenged the validity of this legislation. The Rajasthan High Court rejected the petitions and observed that the Constitution could not provide any protection to the evil social practice which was against public order and morality. On December 1, I gave my assent to the Bill.

In the first general election on adult franchise basis in the Madras Presidency which consisted of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and parts of Karnataka and Kerala, there was no single party commanding a majority in the legislature. Rajaji, who had retired as the Governor-General of India, was approached to take the responsibility of forming the government and leading the State, which he did very successfully. However, after the partition of the Andhra

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Province in 1953, the Tamil members of the Assembly wanted their leader Kamaraj to become the Chief Minister of the residual state. Nehruji was wholly in favour of Rajaji, as he had a high regard for his intellectual abilities, integrity and efficiency. Nonetheless, he decided that the Legislative Assembly could elect a leader. I was then a Member of Parliament as well as Secretary of the PCC. Nehru wanted me to convey to Kamaraj that if Rajaji had to be replaced, then Kamaraj should take personal responsibility as Chief Minister of the State and that he (Nehru) would not accept the dual authority of a party leader and a different Chief Minister. Kamaraj had therefore no option but to contest for the office of the Chief Minister.

Nehru seldom imposed his own nominees as Chief Ministers of States. Rather, he accepted the elected Chief Minister as his colleague and friend. It was only later that the policy of suggesting a Chief Minister by the Prime Minister-cum-Congress President came into vogue. To some extent, the State aspirants themselves were responsible for the change. Not having sufficient strength at the ground level, the aspirants wanted to buttress their position with the blessings of the Prime Minister. This experiment proved disastrous to the Congress Party, since those chosen for the high office could not last long for lack of support from the party and thus instability of the State governments became the rule and not the exception.

The democratic system of electing leaders by the party members themselves and the democratic value system of the minority acquiescing in the decision of the majority, fell into disuse and very often a dissident group emerged against the nominated Chief Minister and weakened the State governments.

Unfortunately, Chief Ministers do not know that the Prime Minister seldom discusses these matters with the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

President. Gone are the days when Nehru used to take a list of Cabinet Ministers and confer with President Rajendra Prasad and also President Radhakrishnan. Even in matters relating to the State and its Cabinet, Nehru was keen on getting the reactions of President Radhakrishnan. They always wanted a dialogue whatever be the subject.

Rajiv used to discuss some issues relating to the States with me but not necessarily all matters relating to all the States. Likewise, he used to discuss some names for inclusion in the Cabinet but not each and every name. He was fully conversant with modern techniques of administration buttressed by computers, graphs and charts. His scientific mind would not accept the fact that human behaviour rarely conformed to graphs and charts. He had a fixed view that the older generation had failed the nation after Independence. However much I remonstrated to him that it was the older generation which had transformed a benighted, backward, medieval India into a modern industrial one and also brought the country abreast with the world in science and technology, it made no impression on him. It must be said to his credit though that at all times he received my views with utmost consideration and respect. I often sent notes and the memoranda on matters relating to administration but never worried as to whether they were accepted or not. They were like "fire-and-forget" missiles.

There was furore in the Rajya Sabha when on December 2, BJP leader L.K. Advani raised a query about the fate of the Indian Post Office Amendment Bill which was pending. Parliamentary procedures forbade comment on the conduct of the President. Advani seized this opportunity to reiterate his opposition to the Bill and demand for withdrawal of the entire law.

December 3 is Babu Rajendra Prasad's birthday and December 4 is mine. I used to feel an affinity with Dr.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Rajendra Prasad, perhaps because of the close proximity in our dates of birth. Till I became Vice-President I never celebrated my birthday, even during the time when I was in the Tamil Nadu government or during my tenure in the Union Ministry. I discouraged people calling on me or celebrating my birthday. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, however, had a habit of making a note of such occasions. I was deeply touched when on December 4, 1980 she sent me a letter conveying her best wishes. When I became the Vice-President and Chairman of the Rajya Sabha I initiated the practice of sending birthday greetings to all members of the Rajya Sabha. This was warmly appreciated by the members and Khushwant Singh, journalist, commented that it was the best piece of public relations that he had come across.

I undertook a tour of Madhya Pradesh for four days. It is customary to provide a guard of honour to the President on his first official visit to a State. After inspection of the guard of honour, I proceeded to Raj Bhavan along with Governor Chandy. At Raj Bhavan, a large number of State officials were introduced who briefed me on several State matters, including the condition of the Bhopal gas tragedy victims. In the night, the Governor hosted a banquet for me in which Ministers, judges, selected legislators and top bureaucrats participated. I was happy to note that the Governor had strictly followed my circular to all Governors informing that the banquet in my honour should be modest and that no costly presents should be given to the President.

On November 11, I visited the Mahila Kalyan Samiti run by Vimla Sharma, wife of the Vice-President, Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma. The organisation provides employment to about 400 people in several small industries, assists handicapped people in learning some occupation and rehabilitates destitute and economically disadvantaged women. Addressing the gathering I complimented Mrs. Sharma on

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

the humanitarian services she was rendering to less privileged sections of society. I also pointed out the importance of small industries and industrial estates in the industrial structure of the country. The low capital base, proportionately high employment potential and the short gestation period of the small-scale sector made it ideally suited for our Indian conditions. Thereafter I inaugurated the Red Cross dispensary for the benefit of the Bhopal gas tragedy victims. I told the audience that there should be greater control and supervision over hazardous industries and more safety precautions against such chemical pollution. I hoped that the Red Cross dispensary would not only give relief to the victims but also promote consciousness among people of the dangers of pollution.

The local people were hostile to the Red Cross and said the money they got was not used for the victims of the Bhopal tragedy but for lavish personal expenditure of those in charge. But I found the dispensary well equipped with modern facilities. If there was any waste elsewhere it was not apparent to me.

In the evening there was a grand public reception organised by Chief Minister, Motilal Vora, the Mayor of Bhopal and other prominent citizens. There was a large crowd of about twenty thousand people in the open maidan. Apparently they had come to have a glimpse of their new President. At the public meeting Governor Chandy spoke in English, so when I started reading my speech in Hindi there was great ovation accompanied by thunderous cheers. Newspapers next day wrote that I had captured the hearts of the people of Bhopal and Madhya Pradesh. In my speech I complimented Madhya Pradesh on the progress it was making but added that it had potential for faster growth. I laid stress on the importance of national unity and the economic advantages that would accrue to every part of

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

India by sharing the entire natural resources of the country.

In the evening I visited Bharat Bhavan, well known for its exquisitely designed exhibition of historical and cultural artefacts. We were also entertained to a short Hindustani music programme by the well-known maestro Mallikarjun Mansur.

The annual national science exhibition organised in memory of Jawaharlal Nehru was held at Jabalpur on November 12. Inaugurating the exhibition I recalled the revolutionary change that Nehru was able to bring about in the attitude of the nation towards science.

In the early days some people calling themselves nationalists had opposed Nehru's spending money on science as indulging in extravagant luxury. Panditji answered them saying that even the alleviation of poverty can be carried out only through the application of science to rural problems.

Nehru strove to bring about a scientific temper in the country. The science exhibition was conducted entirely by students of schools and contained many exhibits of great value. Krishna Sahi, Union Minister of State for Education, and Motilal Vora, Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, accompanied me during the tour of the exhibition and offered encouragement and appreciation to the children.

In the evening we went to Kanha National Park. It is one of the largest tiger parks in the country. The forest guards had spotted a tiger and they suggested that we immediately go into the forest to have a glimpse of the tiger. So we at once mounted an elephant and went into the thick jungle. Elephants are accustomed to taking visitors and so were very docile. They cut through the branches of trees and shrubs pushing them aside with their trunks. Within fifteen to twenty minutes we came very close (hardly twenty feet) to a tiger lying majestically on the grass, holding its head aloft. It

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

looked as if it was posing for a photograph. The tiger was, of course, totally indifferent to the President of India and showed no signs of awareness of the presence of the highest dignitary of the nation! Even when I took some pictures it did not move. When I showed some nervousness at being so close to the knight of the forest, the forest guards grew eloquent on the qualities of the tiger. They said that tigers do not attack elephants and that they do not harm people when they are not hungry. They added that tigers attacked largely in self-defence and self-preservation and also when they were provoked. The guards said that tigers were 'perfect gentlemen'.

Chief Minister Vora said that tigers have a habit of disappointing distinguished visitors by secluding themselves in their retreat and that only in response to his prayer did the tiger gave *darshan* that day.

We also saw a large variety of animals, such as herds of deer, antelopes, and sambhurs grazing on meadows. In the night we saw a film on tigers, how they hunt their prey, how they eat, preserve their food, etc. Each tiger has a certain territory and it does not allow another tiger to poach into it. A race between a sambhur deer, fleeing for his life, and a tiger is exciting, but it is an unequal race. The tiger is about two metres long and covers in three strides what a deer does in four and therefore the tiger overtakes the deer.

On November 13, at 6 a.m. we again visited the Park and were lucky enough to find another tiger among the bushes. We were closer to the tiger this time than on the previous day. We were assured by the forest guards that we were lucky in being able to see a tiger every time we visited. After the visit to the park, I met a few tribal people and witnessed their cultural programme. I asked the tribal people what they wanted. They presented a very small list of demands such as a school, a small dam and few other things. I immediately

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

asked Chief Minister Vora to provide the villagers the amenities they wanted and complimented the villagers on their public spirit, viz., asking for common amenities like education, water supply. The tribals then gave a demonstration of their dance in which I also joined which made them feel proud and happy. This made me instantly popular with the local people.

Dr. Velayati, Foreign Minister of Iran, paid a courtesy call. Welcoming him I referred to the unfortunate fratricidal war between Iran and Iraq and hoped that peace would prevail in the region. Dr. Velayati repeated the charge that Iraq was the aggressor and that the international community should not condone wanton aggression. We did not pursue the subject further but talked about the ancient and historic ties between Persia and India.

The Foreign Minister of Ethiopia who came next thanked the Government of India for the food aid of a hundred thousand tonnes given by us during the acute famine in the previous year. This gesture on our part not only earned the gratitude of Ethiopia but also enhanced our image as an aid-giving country to the less developed nations.

Ranganathan, India's Ambassador to China, was the next visitor. He gave a picture of the Sino-Indian border situation and felt that the longer a solution was delayed the greater would be the Chinese claims and demands. I asked him what he thought of freezing of our actual positions on the ground and continuing negotiations for a final settlement. Being a cautious diplomat he asked me if I had sounded the Prime Minister on this thought. I told him that I had asked the Prime Minister to examine this suggestion and the Prime Minister had pointed out that there were disputes even in regard to what the position of parties on the ground was. The ambassador said that it could be a good beginning but doubted whether any of the parties would

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

take the initiative of proposing it. I was fully alive to the implications of such a proposal. India has a parliamentary commitment to recover every inch lost during the 1962 war and freezing of the frontiers would be exploited by the opposition as virtual surrender of our land.

T.N. Kaul, Ambassador to the Soviet Union, was the last caller for the day. He mooted the idea that I should visit the USSR for the closing ceremony of the Festival of India and also undertake a visit to other parts of the country. This had been already indicated by the Prime Minister. I told Kaul that as Chairman of the National Commission of Nehru Centenary Celebrations we wanted to invite Gorbachev and also give him the Nehru Award for International Understanding. He jumped at the idea and said he would work on it. I advised him to have a talk with the Prime Minister before initiating diplomatic action. Kaul expatiated on the true and genuine concern of the USSR towards India and their eagerness to intensify our mutual co-operation in many areas. He referred to the excellent rapport that I had established with the Soviet Union as Defence Minister.

The Ambassador of Sweden presented his credentials on November 30. The usual tea ceremony after the presentation of credentials was a little awkward this time. The Bofors affair was a hot issue in India, even in Parliament. Neither of us wanted to refer to that matter. The usual platitudes about strengthening the relationship between the two countries did not last long and there were embarrassing silences in between. I think both of us felt relieved when the meeting was over.

The Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Tahiliani, made his farewell call. According to our defence regulations the Chief of Staff retires at the end of a three-year tenure or at the age of sixty, whichever is earlier. This rule is inflexible, irrespective of whether the incumbent is fit, active or otherwise.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Soviet Defence Minister Ustinov once asked me why India was changing its generals so often. I replied in one word, "democracy". He laughed at our democracy and I at the absence of it in Ustinov's country.

Jathedar Ajaib Singh and six others presented a memorandum to me. They repeated the old demands, viz., release of Jodhpur detenus, transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab, etc. I asked them if they had any solution or suggestion for combating terrorism in Punjab and their answer was that if the demands were met, terrorists would themselves give up violence.

Admiral Nadkarni who had taken charge as Chief of the Naval Staff paid his official call. He is a competent and reliable officer and I had known his qualities during my tenure in the Defence Ministry. We discussed programmes for strengthening the Navy and for expediting supplies from the Soviet Union, which I had negotiated earlier.

The Defence Services provide a band to Rashtrapati Bhavan for three months. When these bands leave, they take a photograph with the President. I told the Military Secretary that, instead of merely spending a minute with them at the photo session, I would like the band to play for half an hour and also have tea with me. The Artillery Centre Brass Band which was taking leave enjoyed the new arrangement and expressed deep gratitude for this gesture of mine.

The King of Bhutan was on a private visit to India. The usual courtesy of accommodating him in Rashtrapati Bhavan was extended to him. I have known the King since 1980 and have met him several times thereafter. He is a well-informed, articulate person and handles a variety of subjects with ease. He was not very keen to have trade relations with China and feared that such courtesy exchanges would be later interpreted by the Chinese as evidence of acceptance of the Chinese suzerainty. On the other hand, he was very keen

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

to develop trade and other relations with India as he was convinced that only India would stand by him in any crisis. He also spoke about the immense potential that Bhutan has for the generation of hydel power and hoped that India would render all aid and assistance to such projects. I immediately sent a note to the Prime Minister conveying the above. It appeared that the Bhutanese King had said almost the same thing to the Prime Minister also.

The Chief Minister of Rajasthan, Harideo Joshi, paid a courtesy call. He was anti-Indira during her period of tribulation between 1977 and 1980. He also gave evidence against her to the Shah Commission. It was indeed a surprise to me that he was chosen Chief Minister in succession to Shiv Charan Mathur. Joshi was nervous as there were rumours afloat that he was going to be replaced and very indirectly and obliquely sought my support.

On December 3, I presented the national awards to small-scale industrial entrepreneurs. Speaking at the ceremony, I stated that there was an urgent need to upgrade the designs, equipment and process technology employed by small-scale industries. I also expressed concern over the growing incidence of sickness in small industries and urged the financial institutions to provide finance on the basis of the viability of projects rather than on the credit-worthiness of entrepreneurs.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

8

My birthday is an event I do not particularly like to celebrate. However, December 4, 1987, my first birthday as President, started ceremonially with the staff of Rashtrapati Bhavan and their families greeting me on the East Lawn of the Mughal Gardens. The Vice-President, Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers, Chiefs of Staff and Members of Parliament met me individually and in groups and offered their felicitations. A large number of well-wishers gathered in the Yellow Drawing Room and offered me flowers and garlands. Personally, I do not like these ritualistic practices but when one is in a senior position, one's individual preferences cannot always take precedence over important formal and social considerations. It was a continuous exercise lasting from morning till noon. At noon I went to the "Malai Mandir", a temple on a hill in South Delhi, a unique replica of Chola architecture in granite, whose construction I had organised earlier as President of the registered society.

December 4, is also observed as Navy Day. The Navy has set an enviable record during peace as well as wartime. Thanks to the massive support given by the Soviet Union, the Navy has considerably increased its strength and modernised itself. On Navy Day, I was chief guest at the reception hosted by the Chief of the Naval Staff. The Vice-President, the Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers and retired and working naval officers participated in the function. Having been Defence Minister some three years earlier, I

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

knew most of the officers personally and moved freely amongst them. Among the Service bands, the Naval band is rated the best and always wins the Republic Day award for best performance during the Beating the Retreat ceremony.

About this time, comments on my performance as President were published in many newspapers. Here is an excerpt: "In the five short months that he has been in Rashtrapati Bhavan, President Venkataraman has made his presence felt. The changes may be small as yet but the staff is in no doubt that more are coming, in keeping with the new incumbent's cultured personality. For starters, Mr. Venkataraman has done away with the lavish teas for which the Presidential Lodge was famous. While earlier Presidents rarely tucked into pastry and crisp savouries that were prepared every afternoon, the rest of the staff ate to their heart's content. No longer so, it seems. In another departure from established tradition Mr. Venkataraman has decided not to accept gifts during his tours to the States. The President's Secretary apparently has sent out letters to all the State governments instructing them to dispense with the custom of lavishing presents.... Culture is another area in which the President and his wife are active and the couple is busy trying to inject a large dose of it in the many social activities. Maybe the halls of Rashtrapati Bhavan will again echo to the strains of classical music and dance, sounds which have become a rarity in recent years."

December 7, is the Armed Forces Flag Day when collections are made throughout the country for welfare of the armed forces. As much as a crore and sixty-two lakhs of rupees was collected during the year 1986. Tamil Nadu was ahead of all the States, collecting Rs. 69,95,000 against a target of Rs. 3,25,000 followed Maharashtra which collected Rs. 25 lakhs against a target of Rs. 4,55,000.

Sometime later, officers of the Ministry of External

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Affairs came over for a discussion on one of the suggestions I had made to Rajiv Gandhi, regarding Sri Lanka. I had suggested that an interim government for the merged Northern and Eastern province may be formed with the LTTE if possible and without them if necessary. The officers came for a detailed discussion regarding my views on the matter. I explained to them the advantages of implementing the Indo-Sri Lanka agreement by forming an interim government and allowing it to assume responsibility for law and order. It was my view that the LTTE would stand isolated if they did not join the interim administration while all the other parties came together. The officers however, felt that the LTTE might resort to violence and disruption and create a situation in which orderly administration could not be carried on. Nevertheless they said they would have the whole issue examined from all angles.

Late one evening, around 8 p.m., Natwar Singh, Minister of State in the External Affairs Ministry, and five of his officers came over for an official briefing. They said that they had carefully examined my suggestion regarding an interim government in the North-East province of Sri Lanka. They were at pains to explain why the interim government could not be formed. I listened to them patiently but without much interest since I was convinced that an interim administration in the North-East province of Sri Lanka with or without the LTTE would go a long way in achieving a solution to the pressing problem.

On December 10, I released a commemorative stamp on Rameshwari Nehru. Rameshwari was an extraordinary personality. Born in affluent circumstances and married into the Nehru family, she shunned a comfortable life of leisure and devoted herself to the service of Harijans at the call of Gandhiji.

What a great alchemist Gandhiji was! He could not only

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

draw the right people into his fold but even make them undergo suffering and sacrifice with a smile. He metamorphosed the ordinary man into a leader and vice versa. Rameshwari Nehru declined membership of Parliament when it was offered but accepted the office of the Director of Rehabilitation during the aftermath of Partition; a rare instance of placing service before self. Her sons Braj Kumar Nehru (ICS) and Balwant Kumar Nehru are very good friends of mine. Braj Kumar Nehru was one of the talented civil servants of India. I was associated with him as a member of the Indian delegation to the United Nations in the mid-fifties, when he was serving in the Indian Embassy at Washington and since then we have been very close.

The Indian chess prodigy and the first Indian Grandmaster Viswanathan Anand called on me with his parents. He had done India proud and I decided to recommend his name for the award of Padma Shri. Later in the day, I received twenty-two chess Grandmasters who had participated in international chess tournaments. A chess enthusiast myself, I talked to them with easy familiarity about the game, much to the surprise of the international experts.

Governor Rajeshwar of Sikkim and his wife called on us. Rajeshwar was Director of the Intelligence Bureau and had been the kingpin of that organisation during Indira's time. He said that the Chief Minister of Sikkim, Narbahadur Bhandari, acted arbitrarily and defied the Centre. He was not in favour of the demand for citizenship rights for 40,000 Nepalese who, the Chief Minister claimed, had settled in Sikkim years ago. Rajeshwar thought it was only an attempt to strengthen the Nepali element in Sikkim for the Chief Minister's election purposes. Nor was the Governor favourably inclined towards the Chief Minister's claim for reservation of seats for the majority community, the Nepalese, in the Legislature of Sikkim. He said that while

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

reservation of seats for minorities was understandable, reservation to perpetuate the majority was not politically sound. He also foresaw a danger to the integrity of India in the Gorkhaland agitation spreading into Sikkim and Nepal. He was positive that the Gorkha agitation in Darjeeling and the hill areas should be firmly put down and that it should not be used for gaining political mileage against the Marxist regime in West Bengal.

On December 11, the Prime Minister made his routine call. This time, however, he spoke about a number of matters unconnected with administration or national politics.

V.C. Shukla, then staying in No.1 Willington Crescent allotted to him when he was Minister, came with the request that members of his family should be allowed to use the Rashtrapati Bhavan swimming pool. He was bitterly opposed to the Prime Minister and the entire order of things. When people holding office come to see me they often indulge in a diatribe against the opposition, calling it ignorant, incoherent, purposeless and unpatriotic. Likewise, when people out of office call on me they endow, ironically, the same attributes to people belonging to the ruling party!

I was informed that my predecessor, Giani Zail Singh, apparently gave an interview to the press about this time, saying that Chandra Swami wanted P.V. Narasimha Rao to be made the Prime Minister when there had been speculation about the dismissal of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. He had also stated that at one time I was agreeable to my being considered for that office. It was a pity that Giani Zail Singh gave that press interview when I had clearly stated that I would have nothing to do with political machinations. But I did not go to the press and contradict the statement as it would unneccessarily prolong the controversy.

I presented the National Awards to master craftspersons and master weavers at a pleasant ceremony at Vigyan

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Bhavan on December 15. During my days as minister in Madras State (now Tamil Nadu) I had taken a lot of interest in promoting local handicrafts and handlooms. I had established the School of Sculpture at Mahabalipuram, a school for the manufacture of bronze icons at Swamimalai, a society for the manufacture of traditional temple lamps at Nachiarkoil, a school for Kalamkari painting and one for temple car manufacture, among several others. Therefore I had a deep and abiding interest in art and craft promotion and I very much appreciated the progress that had been made in the last ten years.

Valmiki Choudhari who was Personal Secretary to Dr. Rajendra Prasad came to meet me and presented me the volume of diaries and correspondence of Dr. Prasad. He has been a true Boswell. He has maintained an excellent record of the ten years when Rajendra Prasad was President and also all copies of correspondence between the President, the Prime Minister and others. Incidentally during my term as President, while I kept notes of daily events, I did not maintain copies of my correspondence with the Prime Minister except for a few letters which I considered of national importance.

All this while, I was told of the unique problems faced by Aligarh Muslim University.The well-known educationist and former Governor of Bihar, A.R. Kidwai, was the Chancellor. His term had expired and the Executive Committee decided to extend it. However, rival groups of the Old Boys' Association had taken the matter concerning the extension to court.

The Vice-Chancellor appealed to me, as I was Visitor of the University, that the resolution extending the term of the Chancellor should be rescinded as there was no provision in the statutes of the University for such an extension. Kidwai, on the other hand, made a representation to me stating that

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

rescinding the resolution of the Executive Council would cause a vacuum in the office.

In response, I asked my Secretary, Prem Kumar, to look into the various aspects of this matter and also confer with the Education Ministry as to the appropriate course of action to be taken. Since legal opinion given on an earlier occasion held that the President was governed by the advice of Council of Ministers, I felt that even while functioning as Visitor, I should be advised by the Ministry concerned.

M.G. Ramachandran, Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, called on me and explained his position with regard to the Sri Lankan situation. The LTTE, after initial support to the Rajiv-Jayewardene agreement, resorted to confrontation with the IPKF (Indian Peace-Keeping Force). There were rumours in the Tamil Nadu press that Ramachandran wanted a cease-fire by the IPKF in Jaffna during the forthcoming Christmas season.

Ramachandran told me that there was no substance in the report and that he was in full agreement with the policy of the Government of India. The Government of India had suggested to Jayewardene that a proclamation may be issued constituting the Northern and Eastern areas into a single province. Ramachandran hoped that such a move would have a salutary effect on all the Tamil groups and pave the way for the formation of an interim government.

On December 20, I visited Trivandrum (now Thiruvananthapuram). In the morning I released a commemorative stamp on Rev. Fr. Chavara Elias Kuriakose, who was a legend among the people for his humanitarian work and for spreading education. He was the first to set up a printing press in Kerala in 1831. In the afternoon I inaugurated the National Games, the biggest sports extravaganza, at the National Stadium. It was a colourful show with caparisoned elephants and a marchpast of over

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

three thousand athletes from all over the country. I returned to Delhi the same evening.

Khurshid Alam Khan met me and pleaded for converting the Jamia Millia into a full-fledged University, from its present status of a deemed University. He was bitter that he had been dropped from the Ministry. I also felt that Khurshid was doing a fairly good job as Minister and was surprised that he was dropped and Z.A. Ansari, a fumbler, was retained. Strange are the ways of not only God but also of Prime Ministers!

Shortly before Christmas, I organized the singing of Christmas carols in the Ashoka Hall of Rashtrapati Bhavan and invited leading Christian citizens and Christian members in the staff to participate. The carols went on for an hour in the evening and the Christian community deeply appreciated this gesture. This was on par with the *iftar* dinner for the Muslim community and Guru Nanak *bhajans* for the Sikh community, also held in Rashtrapati Bhavan.

I soon came to know that the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu M.G. Ramachandran had arranged a mammoth reception for me at the Nehru Stadium in Madras. He apparently wanted it to be the greatest event of the year. Friends from Madras telephoned me to tell me about the massive welcome arches that had been put up in all parts of the city.

I had planned to leave Delhi at 9 a.m. on December 24, for the Madras reception. At 3 a.m., Joint Secretary Gopal Gandhi rang up and told me that M.G. Ramachandran had passed away and that there was great commotion in Madras City. I left Delhi as per schedule, not for the gala reception but for the sorrowful funeral. I went straight to Rajaji Hall where the body was lying. Even in death his face reflected his special charisma, and I was greatly moved.

An indescribable affinity had developed between us. He had the highest regard for me but more than that there was

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

genuine affection between us. Earlier, when he had the first serious heart attack, I happened to be in Madras and I immediately arranged, with Indira Gandhi's help, his visit to the U.S.A. for medical attention. Everyone in Tamil Nadu was grateful to me for the prompt action taken. On several occasions I had taken up the cudgels on his behalf with the Centre. Indira Gandhi always thought I had a tremendous influence over him and often used me as an emissary for conveying her wishes. At his death I felt overcome by uncontrollable grief and hastened away from the sorrowful scene.

Before our departure for Delhi, my wife and I called on Janaki Ramachandran and offered our heartfelt condolences.

I enquired of the Governor, S.L. Khurana, about immediate arrangements for the continuation of the Government. He said he had asked Nedunchezhian, the seniormost minister, to hold charge till a new leader was elected.

Soon after this unhappy event, I made my first visit to Bombay, after becoming President. As part of the national celebrations of the 40th year of freedom, several heroes of the freedom struggle, Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, Sri Krishna Sinha, S. Satyamurthi and scientists such as Ramanujan, the mathematical genius, and C.V. Raman, the Nobel laureate, were honoured. The birth centenary of K.M. Munshi, the founder of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, also took place this year. There was a grand meeting in Bombay in which rich tributes were paid to Kulapati Munshi. The Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan conferred its prestigious Honorary Membership on Morarji Desai, J.R.D. Tata and R.R. Diwakar. I delivered the commemoration address. After the function I left for Delhi.

On the last day of the year 1987, Kumudben Joshi, Governor of Andhra Pradesh, called on me. The Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, N.T. Rama Rao, had complained against the Governor's activities, such as visiting the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

districts frequently, calling meetings of freedom fighters, and making insidious propaganda against him. There was practically a running feud between the two.

Under the Constitution, Governors are expected to function as fair and unbiased heads of state. During the Constituent Assembly debates there was stress on the role of the Governor as a guide, philosopher and friend of the State. It was then envisaged that only men of outstanding abilities and prestige would be appointed Governors. In course of time this high ideal was completely forgotten and the office of the Governor became a sinecure for unwanted or inconvenient politicians.

Even the practice of the Prime Minister consulting the President which had been established during the Rajendra Prasad–Nehru era slowly fell into disuse. Only occasionally was a formal note received by the President from the Home Ministry, seeking his approval for the names proposed. No doubt, the President can either call the Prime Minister for discussion or return the file for reconsideration, but ultimately the decision of the Cabinet is binding on the President. Therefore, Presidents seldom interfere in such matters.

During my tenure, all the Prime Ministers, Rajiv Gandhi, V.P. Singh, Chandrashekhar and Narasimha Rao, informally consulted me on the appointment of Governors and I do not remember any occasion where I had taken any exception to the names proposed. I had made a few suggestions which were generally accepted and even if not, I never raised the matter again with the Prime Minister. This is only one instance of the harmonious relationship that existed between me and the Prime Ministers I dealt with, during my tenure as President.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

9

The new year started with the usual gaiety. Members of the staff with their families greeted us on the lawns bedecked with the lovely flowers of the Moghul Gardens. The public lined up and greeted us, some with music also. Dignitaries came and exchanged greetings. I was told that the New Year Day was a great event in the days of the Raj.

That month (January) I made visits to Andhra Pradesh and the Andaman Islands. In Andhra, I declared open a bridge across the river Krishna connecting Guntur and Krishna districts. In Vijayawada I addressed a freedom fighters' conference and praised Giani Zail Singh who as Home Minister had initiated generous welfare measures for the benefit of freedom fighters.

As part of the fortieth anniversary celebrations of Independence, birthdays of eminent Indians who had participated in the freedom struggle were to be observed. For Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose whose birthday falls on January 23, it was considered appropriate to celebrate it in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. On my visit there I inaugurated a stadium named after Netaji and in my speech on that occasion eulogised his role in organising the Indian National Army. I also went round the notorious Cellular Jail where 600-odd freedom fighters had been brutally treated while under detention. A grim place indeed!

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

After the public meeting I returned to Delhi the same day, so as to participate fully in the Republic Day ceremonies. The most heart-warming of these, at least for me, is the time spent with children who are recipients of gallantry awards. So innocent and yet so remarkably courageous, their enthusiasm is contagious and one emerges rejuvenated. I complimented the children on their acts of bravery and wished them all success in life. I asked one tiny child what she was looking forward to while in Delhi, and she promptly replied "riding on the elephant at the Republic Day Parade."

President Jayewardene of Sri Lanka accompanied by his wife and a large delegation including important Cabinet Ministers arrived on January 25. For the first time the ceremonial reception and inspection of the guard of honour was accorded to him in the forecourt of Rashtrapati Bhavan instead of at the airport. President Jayewardene's motorcade was met by the President's Bodyguard at the main entrance and escorted to the alighting point. The traditional twenty-one gun salute was fired at this point of the proceedings. On alighting, President Jayewardene and his wife were welcomed by myself and my wife and then by the Prime Minister and his wife. The visiting President was led to the saluting base where the national anthems of both the countries were played. Thereafter, the visiting President inspected the Inter-Services guard of honour. The invitees present for the occasion were introduced to the visiting President who was then escorted to the luxurious Dwarka Suite.

In the evening President Jayewardene called on me officially. He praised Rajiv Gandhi for his deft handling of the Sri Lanka situation and added that the LTTE had missed a great opportunity to fulfil the aspirations of the ethnic Tamils. We talked about global terrorism and the havoc it wreaked on developing countries. Jayewardene hoped to have detailed discussions with the Prime Minister and his

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

colleagues on a wide range of subjects, including the Friendship Treaty. I assured the President that India had the warmest feelings towards Sri Lanka and would do everything to strengthen the relationship between our countries. I wished him and his wife a very pleasant stay in our country.

On January 25, I made the customary Republic Day broadcast to the nation. In my address, I referred to the conflict in Sri Lanka and said that it was unfortunate that a section of the Tamils had not cooperated in implementing the historic agreement between Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and President Jayewardene, when the agreement offered a peaceful and democratic solution to the ethnic problem in Sri Lanka. Paying my tribute to the commendable role of the Indian Peace-Keeping Force in Sri Lanka, I said, "Waging peace is infinitely more difficult than waging war. But it is also infinitely more rewarding."

The customary banquet for the guest of honour at the Republic Day celebrations was held the same night. President Jayewardene made some very significant statements in his reply to the toast. He said that he would never give in to violence and that he had sought the help and advice of Indian leaders to resolve the ethnic crisis. He added, "I am a friend of India, lover of its people and follower of its greatest soul (Mahatma Gandhi) and will remain so till the time comes for me to wind up my work." President Jayewardene bemoaned the spread of terrorism throughout the world and felt that humanity could survive only through *ahimsa* and *maithri*.

The grand Republic Day parade is held annually in the capital, New Delhi on January 26, and the Government usually invites a foreign dignitary as the guest of honour for the celebrations. Officially the day begins with the Prime Minister offering homage to the martyrs at the India Gate

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

and then proceeding to the parade stand to formally welcome the President and the chief guest. The President, after accepting the salute from the Bodyguard, proceeds along with the chief guest in a procession escorted by mounted *sowars*.

At the saluting base, the National Flag is unfurled and National Anthem played. Thereafter the parade commander salutes the President and the parade begins to move down Rajpath. The highlight of that year's parade was the display of Bofors Howitzer guns and the indigenous tank Arjun.

As President I had to stand and salute for over an hour as regiments marched past. After half an hour, one's arm starts to ache and several times I had to rest it whenever there were brief intervals. The military parade is followed by a cultural pageant and mercifully the President is now allowed to sit. The President's job can be a tiring one!

The concluding ceremony of the colourful Republic Day festivities that linger long in one's memory is Beating the Retreat. Even Lutyens, who chose the site and designed the landscape, could not have imagined the splendour of Raisina Hill during the Beating the Retreat ceremony. Accompanied by the Guest of Honour, President Jayewardene, I arrived at Vijay Chowk at the stroke of 5 p.m. After introduction and playing of the National Anthem, the Military Band enthralled us for the duration of the ceremony. There was keen competition among the three Services to out-perform each other much to the delight of the audience. As the bands retreated to the lingering strains of *Sare jahan se achcha*, the caparisoned camels withdrew and then the fireworks display brought the ceremony to a close. Rashtrapati Bhavan and the Secretariat buildings were illuminated, their stupendous outline leaving the spectators spellbound.

Life is a succession of joys and sorrows. The festivities of

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

the Republic Day are followed by the tragic anniversary of the assassination of the Father of the Nation. Forty years had passed since that fateful day but none can erase the grief caused by the horrendous crime against the nation.

On the morning of January 30, members of my family and myself went to the *samadhi* of the Father of the Nation at Rajghat and offered our homage, followed by *bhajans* and readings from the *Gita*.

The day is also observed as Martyrs Day in memory of those who had laid down their lives for the freedom of the nation. So I returned to Rajghat around 11 a.m. and placed a wreath on the *samadhi*. Precisely at 11 a.m. the gun was fired to mark the commencement of two minutes' silence. The Chiefs of Staff of the Army, Navy and Air Force joined in the ceremony along with the Vice-President, Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers and others. Dignity and solemnity characterised the entire proceedings.

Meanwhile, following the demise of M.G. Ramachandran, the race for the Chief Ministership of Tamil Nadu had intensified. I was informed that R.M. Veerappan, a senior minister in M.G. Ramachandran's Cabinet, was staking his claim for leadership of the Legislature Party and that he had the backing of about 45 members. Finding that he was not able to muster enough strength he made a tactical move of proposing Janaki Ramachandran, MGR's widow, for the leadership. This move increased his strength to over 90 members. I understood that Janaki Ramachandran was initially reluctant to take up the leadership, but was persuaded when cautioned that her rival Jayalalitha might take control of the party if she did not agree. When the news of Janaki Ramachandran being sponsored for leadership became public, V.R. Nedunchezhian, the caretaker Chief Minister, announced that he was going to contest too. This was somewhat tactless on his part, since as the acting Chief

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Minister he could have said that he would help the party to arrive at a unanimous choice. When Nedunchezhian staked his claim, Jayalalitha, who was the Propaganda Secretary of the Party, promptly announced her support to Nedunchezhian and the Party split immediately as a result. The relative strength of the Janaki and Jayalalitha groups was reported to be 90 and 35 respectively. A meeting of the AIADMK Legislature Party at the end of December 1987 was boycotted by the Jayalalitha group while 97 Assembly members attended and unanimously elected Janaki Ramachandran as their leader. These members called on the Governor, S.L. Khurana, and staked their claim for forming the government. Khurana met every MLA individually, with the help of the Secretary of the Assembly who identified them.

Khurana told me later that he consulted the then Home Minister, Buta Singh, who advised him to postpone the decision for one week. He also said that he had argued that this would not be feasible since 97 members of the State legislature had already signified their choice. Moreover, the Nedunchezhian group had neither given the number of its supporters nor presented the members.

On January 3, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi who was on holiday in Lakshadweep and P.V. Narasimha Rao, the seniormost member of the Cabinet, called on me and discussed the Tamil Nadu situation. I advised Rajiv Gandhi that the Union Government need not interfere but allow the local party to solve its own problems and that if the Union Government wanted to study the situation, they might request Khurana to defer his decision for a day or two. I do not know if Narasimha Rao took any action but to the surprise of all of us, Khurana declared on the evening of January 3 that he had accepted Janaki Ramachandran as the person having the largest support among the legislators and

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

that he would swear her in as Chief Minister and also direct her to prove her majority of the total membership of the House within three weeks, viz., by January 24, 1988.

When it was pointed out to Khurana that the Constitution required the Council of Ministers to have a majority of those present and voting on a confidence motion and not a majority of the total membership, Khurana went elaborately into the question, consulting eminent lawyers and finally gave his decision which was that a simple majority of those present and voting was sufficient.

In the days following the appointment of Janaki Ramachandran as Chief Minister, Members of Parliament belonging to each of the splinter groups frequently met me. I told them that it was entirely an inter-party dispute and that neither I nor the Prime Minister would like to intervene. After being sworn in as Chief Minister, Janaki Ramachandran came to Delhi and met the Prime Minister. She assured Rajiv Gandhi that she would continue M.G. Ramachandran's policies regarding Sri Lanka and Centre-State relations, and that she would cooperate with the Centre fully. She sought the support of the Congress Party members (numbering sixty-four) for her Ministry. Later, when Janaki Ramachandran met me, she said that the Prime Minister advised her to patch up the differences in her party and that he would support the duly established government. From what she conveyed to me, I gathered that she interpreted the Prime Minister's words as an indirect commitment of the Congress Party to her government.

In a conciliatory move she said that she would make Nedunchezhian the Deputy Chief Minister while permitting Jayalalitha to continue as the Propaganda Secretary in order to achieve unity. She however refused to recognise Jayalalitha as the General Secretary of the AIADMK Party saying she had not been duly elected by the general body of the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

members, as required by the AIADMK constitution. I asked her whether she put forth these proposals to the other side and she said that she made some overtures to Nedunchezhian but had no response from him.

On January 12, that is, the very next day after Janaki Ramachandran met him, the Prime Minister called on me and gave an account of his conversation with her. He said it was easy to communicate with her as she spoke fluent Hindi, unlike the time when he used to talk to MGR. He said that Janaki Ramachandran asked for Congress support for her in the Assembly. He told me that he replied "We will support the AIADMK Government" and with a twinkle in his eye, added, "I don't think she understood what the phrase implied".

The Prime Minister asked me for my views on the Tamil Nadu situation. I told him that the AIADMK factions may fight it out between themselves. I also said that the Congress Party should function as a responsible opposition and help in the solution of the State's problems.

The Prime Minister agreed that this was the right course to follow. However, I was told that some members of the Congress Legislature Party of Tamil Nadu wanted to defeat Janaki Ramachandran's government in the hope that the Congress Party would be called upon to form the government as it was the main opposition party in the House. I gave no credence to it as the Prime Minister had indicated a different line.

K. Rajaram, former Tamil Nadu Minister, desperately wanted to meet me. He rang up several times and so I agreed to meet him at my camp in Hyderabad. He came with a suggestion that a compromise should be effected between the two AIADMK groups and that I should offer my good offices on this behalf. I told him categorically that in my position as the President of India I could not interfere in internal party

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

affairs at all. It was for the rival groups to reach an understanding among themselves. Since Janaki Ramachandran had already made some compromise overtures, it was for the party members to find a solution. Rajaram left, saying that he would try to persuade Nedunchezhian and his group to bring about some understanding within the AIADMK groups. I did not know what happened in the next few days.

On the evening of January 24, Jayalalitha called on me. She said that Rajaram had crossed over to Janaki's side and that people thought and said that I had asked him to do so. I told her that the news was totally baseless. I repeated what I had always been saying — that the rival groups should try and settle their differences among themselves. I told her also that from my position and office I could not interfere in local politics.

At the January 25 banquet for Sri Lankan President Jayewardene, the Prime Minister informed me that Jayalalitha met him before he came to dinner. He was about to say something. But as the guests started crowding in, the Prime Minister said that he would "talk about it" later. The next few days were completely taken up with the Republic Day celebrations and Tamil Nadu went out of my mind.

On January 27, around 10 p.m., Ananthasamy, who was assisting Rajiv Gandhi in Tamil Nadu affairs, telephoned me and said that the TNCC President had started asking the Congress legislators to vote against the confidence motion. There appeared to have been hectic activity on the part of the AIADMK groups and the Congress Party. All the information I received showed that there was acute tension amongst the legislators.

What happened in the Assembly was not within my personal knowledge. I learnt that the Jayalalitha group went to Governor Khurana around 1 p.m. on January 28 and made

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

a representation to the effect that they had elected a new Speaker and passed a vote of no confidence against the Janaki Ministry. At 3 p.m. Janaki's group met the Governor and claimed that a vote of confidence in her Ministry was adopted by the House.

Khurana sent a report recommending dismissal of the Ministry, dissolution of Assembly and imposition of President's rule. This was accepted by the Union Government as the only option open.

Janaki Ramachandran bitterly criticised Rajiv Gandhi and openly accused him of betrayal and of stabbing her in the back. Rajiv Gandhi who met me a little later told me that he was on camp at Agartala and Buta Singh had telephoned him to say that serious malpractices were being indulged in by various political and other groups in Madras. Rajiv Gandhi added that as it was very late in the night and as he had no means of getting more information, he had instructed Buta Singh to act in the best interests of the Congress Party.

Commenting on these sordid events in Tamil Nadu, *The Hindu* stated that the President had displayed undue interest in Tamil Nadu politics and acted in a manner "not befiting his high office". I was hurt, since I had at all times advised both parties to achieve a compromise amongst themselves as I thought it was in the interest of the State. I therefore issued a contradiction characterising the comment as baseless and biased. Some months later N. Ram of *The Hindu* called on me and expressed regret for having wrongly written about me in *The Hindu* editorial. He said he had been misled by several interested parties.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

10

On February 14, 1988 there was a reshuffle of Rajiv Gandhi's Cabinet. Dinesh Singh, who lost his ministerial post in 1971, came back as Cabinet Minister for Water Resources. Two Chief Ministers, Bindeshwari Dube of Bihar and Motilal Vora of Madhya Pradesh, joined the Union Cabinet. Two Ministers, G.S. Dhillon, Minister for Agriculture, and Ram Dulari Sinha, Minister of State for Steel and Mines, were dropped.

In the first three Parliaments, very few changes used to be made in the Cabinet during the five-year term. I would like to cite the example of Kamaraj, who was the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu and who had a very small Cabinet of eight ministers. When the Press asked him whether there would be any changes in the Cabinet, he remarked cryptically "after five years". In my experience, constant shifting of ministers leaves them no time to acquire a grasp of the subject in their charge. I was able to produce results in Tamil Nadu mainly because I was Minister for Industries for ten years continuously.

During Rajiv Gandhi's time there were as many as twenty changes in the Council of Ministers before the above-mentioned reshuffle. Sufficient notice was not given to the new ministers and some did not turn up for the swearing-in at the appointed hour of 10 a.m. After swearing in those present, we adjourned for tea. During tea, it was reported to me that some ministerial appointees like Bindeshwari Dube

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

and Shyamlal Yadav had turned up and that they also sought to be sworn in immediately. I did not like such clumsy proceedings at all, but agreed to perform my duty, so that the business of swearing-in could be over.

I told the Prime Minister to give sufficient notice to Rashtrapati Bhavan staff for making arrangements for swearing in ministers. I also conveyed to him that holding these functions on holidays was best avoided since the Rashtrapati Bhavan staff required for these ceremonies were not readily available. But it has been the experience with all Prime Ministers lately that they delay decisions regarding appointments until the last minute, but urge immediate action to implement their decision, regardless of the inconvenience caused all round.

A little before expanding his Cabinet, Rajiv Gandhi talked to me about the appointment of Governors. He was keen on appointing a senior politician as Governor of Maharashtra and shifting P. Venkatasubbiah to Karnataka. He did not mention the inclusion of either Govind Narain Singh or H.A. Barari in the list of Governors. I suggested the names of Brahmananda Reddi and Hitendra Desai for major states like Maharashtra and Bihar. He said he would send me the proposals which he did and which I approved.

There was criticism at that time, in some quarters, that the non-Congress states had not been consulted before the appointment of their Governors. It is possible that in his great hurry to announce the appointments Rajiv ignored the convention. However, I think that this convention of consulting State governments before the appointment of their Governors is a healthy one and should be preserved, whatever the exigencies. I understood later that the official sources maintained that they had informed the State governments concerned about the appointments. But obviously, informing is not the same as consulting.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Around mid-March, the Prime Minister sent M.L. Fotedar to consult me informally on two matters, one regarding enhanced pension to past Presidents from July 1987 and another regarding Punjab. I sent two unofficial notes to him. Regarding enhanced pension for the President, I pointed out that if it was made retrospective from July 1987, President Sanjiva Reddy would be deprived of the enhanced pension for the period 1982-87 and that there was no logic in granting a higher pension to one President retrospectively and not to the other. I said that retrospective benefit was usually given when an entitlement had been denied earlier and that new benefits took effect only from the date of conferment. I suggested the following alternatives: either the enhanced pension to a President should operate prospectively from the date of the order or retrospectively from the date when any living President demitted office.

About the situation in Punjab, I cautioned the Prime Minister against introduction of emergency provisions in Punjab as suggested in some quarters. Instead, I suggested amending Article 356 of the Constitution, assuming power to extend President's Rule beyond one year up to a maximum of three years as a more appropriate course. After the Rajiv-Longowal agreement, elections were held in Punjab and an Akali government was formed under Surjeet Singh Barnala. The violence and terrorism that plagued Punjab did not abate but escalated and there was a complete breakdown of law and order. Hence President's Rule was imposed on Punjab in May 1987, but the legislature was kept in suspended animation in the hope that a popular government could be revived if the situation improved.

Under the Constitution, as amended during the Janata government at the Centre, President's Rule cannot be extended beyond one year and so elections in Punjab had to be held before May 10, 1988. The Union Government was

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

contemplating amending the Constitution to enable it to declare a state of emergency in the State of Punjab and thereby continuing President's Rule. Originally, under Article 352, emergency could be declared over the whole or a part of India, if the country's security was threatened by war, external aggression or internal disturbance. During the Janata regime, the Article was amended and the words "armed rebellion" were substituted for internal disturbance as a ground for declaration of emergency. Hence, the government could not invoke internal disturbance as a ground for proclamation of emergency. The Government was now contemplating reintroduction of internal disturbance as a ground for declaring emergency. It was in this context that I gave an informal note to Rajiv Gandhi.

The Constitution Amendment Bill (Fifty-ninth Amendment) provided for declaration of emergency in respect of the whole of Punjab or such part of Punjab as may be specified if the President was satisfied *inter alia* that the integrity of India was threatened by internal disturbance in the whole or any part of the territory of Punjab. It also provided for extension of President's Rule from one year to three years under Article 356.

That there had been an alarming deterioration in the law and order situation in Punjab could not be denied. The daily killing of innocent men and women in market places, buses and trains was mounting. Policemen were themselves mortally afraid of terrorists and looked the other way when it came to saving the lives of their kin. In other words, the police force was totally demoralised. The subordinate judiciary was threatened with dire consequences if they convicted any accused militant. Witnesses did not dare to give evidence in court lest they might be attacked by terrorists. The government was unable to protect the lives of those who had actually ventured to depose against the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

militants. Even journalists and media men were threatened with dire retribution if they were so "foolhardy" as to speak out against the militants. In short, an effective civil administration had ceased to function in Punjab. No one believed that elections could be held in Punjab in accordance with the constitutional provisions.

The main thrust of the opposition was against the amendment providing for declaration of emergency on the grounds of internal disturbance and suspension of the right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution. The memory of the Emergency regime of 1975-77 was still fresh in their minds and not only the opposition but eminent jurists also strenuously resisted the amendment. The Government argued that the amendment only related to Punjab, where admittedly, law and order and social peace had ceased to exist, and not to the entire nation. It was explained that the amendment only enabled the government to declare emergency in Punjab if circumstances necessitated it and that there were sufficient safeguards already in the Constitution by way of approval of the declaration by Parliament.

Notwithstanding the strenuous efforts by the opposition, the 59th Constitution Amendment Bill was adopted by both Houses of Parliament and the ball was then in my court. Newspaper editorials counselled me to withhold assent or return the Bill for reconsideration or to refer the issue to the Supreme Court under Article 143 of the Constitution. Leaders of political parties called on me on March 25, and presented a memorandum. The memorandum criticised the Government on the following points:

(1) Undue haste with which such an important piece of legislation was rushed through in both Houses of Parliament.

(2) Erosion of democratic and constitutional rights as a result of declaration of emergency.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

(3) Discrimination against Punjab and denial of fundamental rights to its people.

(4) Possible abuse by the bureaucracy and the minions of the ruling party and political leaders as had happened during the earlier period of the emergency.

They requested me to return the Bill for reconsideration by Parliament or refer the matter to the Supreme Court for advisory opinion.

The next day Rajiv Gandhi called on me to allay the apprehensions of the opposition. He said that an election in Punjab was unthinkable in view of the violence going on every day, that the constitutional amendment was only a reserve power taken by the Government to be used in times of dire necessity and that it was not his intention to use this power. While I appreciated his difficulties, I drew his attention to the informal note I had sent him in which I had suggested, as an alternative the amendment to Article 356, enlarging the period of President's Rule in a State from one year to three years. Rajiv Gandhi said he could not take the risk of the situation getting worse and his not being able to rectify it. Though he did not specifically mention it, he seemed to feel that the necessary strength in both the Houses might not be available later when the need arose. Union Ministers P.V. Narasimha Rao, Chintamani Panigrahi and some others also called on me and explained the Government's position.

Meanwhile, pressure on me was growing from all sides. Madhu Dandavate quoted from my speech of August 8, 1978, when I was in the opposition in Parliament, on the Constitution Amendment Bill where I had said that "the politician looks to the next election and the statesman looks to the next generation". He wanted me to be the statesman and look to the implications of the Bill for the future. Some newspapers quoted from an editorial I had written in

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Swarajya criticising the Emergency of 1975 and urged me to be consistent by withholding assent to the Bill. Some reminded me of my oath to "preserve, protect and defend the Constitution" and asked me not to give my assent to the Bill. Some others quoted from my speech on the assumption of office on July 25, 1987, where I had said "I will neither fail to exercise the duties and functions attached to my office nor stray beyond the powers enshrined in the Constitution by the founding fathers" and wondered what course I would follow on this occasion. The Press was overwhelmingly against the measure and naturally I considered, pondered over and thought about the issue day and night. On March 24, 1988, I received a memorandum from the Secretary-General, Lok Sabha, through the Secretary, Legislative Department, submitting copies of the Constitution (Fifty-Ninth Amendment) Bill 1988 as passed by both Houses of Parliament for the assent of the President "in pursuance of Article 111 of the Constitution of India."

It has been my practice, both when I was at the Bar and later when I used to render decisions as President of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal, to refer every time to the text of any law or rule quoted to make sure there has been no mistake or misquotation. So when I received the memorandum I again referred to Article 111 even though I knew it by heart by this time. It immediately struck me that this Article referred to routine legislation and that there were some special provisions regarding amendments to the Constitution. I vaguely remembered the amendments to Article 368 at the time of the Emergency and the restrictions imposed on the President at that time. I came across Sub-Section (2) of Article 368 which left the President with no option but to assent to an amendment to the Constitution adopted in accordance with the Article.

Furthermore, I felt it was beyond the scope of authority

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

of the President to go into the legal validity of a Bill duly adopted by Parliament and that if there was any infirmity it was within the jurisdiction of courts to pronounce it. I therefore sent a note to the Attorney-General on these two points and invited him for a discussion. The Attorney-General, K. Parasaran, whose erudition and integrity I greatly value, called on me and confirmed that on both these counts I was correct.

On March 30, I gave my assent to the Bill and also issued a Press note. This Press release stated that though the Government memorandum seeking assent to the Constitution (Fifty-ninth Amendment) Bill was submitted under Article 111 of the Constitution, the Article relevant to the cases was Article 368(2) and that there was substantial difference between Article 111 applicable to Bills in general and Article 368(2) applicable specifically to amendments of the Constitution. The Press note also stated that "the Attorney-General has confirmed that the amendment to the Constitution is to be dealt with under Article 368 which also provides for the procedure for such amendments. Clause (2) of Article 368 of the Constitution lays down that when a Bill amending the Constitution is passed by it, it shall be presented to the President who shall give his assent to the Bill. In his opinion, the Article does not give any discretion to the President in a matter relating to the amendment of the Constitution." The Press note added that in view of this, "the President had not found it necessary to go into other issues raised and gave his assent to the Bill."

There was no adverse reaction to my assent at first. Some even commented on the opposition having overlooked Article 368 while making representations to the President. A few suggested the President had snubbed the Government for making a reference under a wrong Article of the Constitution. But slowly, criticism of this Presidential action

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

started emerging. Critics felt that I skirted the issue and relied on a technicality.

An eminent jurist stated that I should have resigned rather than given my assent to the Bill. Some others felt that as President I should have upheld the spirit rather than the letter of the Constitution.

For my own part, I felt I had stood by what I said on the occasion of my assumption of office: "I will not stray beyond the powers enshrined in the Constitution." In my opinion, the President should abide by the unambiguous words of the Constitution and not embark on the uncharted sea of the spirit of the Constitution based on his subjective assessment.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

11

It was customary for the staff of Rashtrapati Bhavan and the public to greet the President on the occasion of Holi and splash colours on each other. As I had never liked this daubing of colours and all unruly scenes associated with it, I quietly ignored it, much to the disappointment of the staff. I did not in fact celebrate Holi during my entire five-year term. Looking back, I do have some regret having deprived the staff of their customary festivities.

On March 19, there was a colourful investiture ceremony in the Durbar Hall of Rashtrapati Bhavan when distinguished men and women were honoured with the Padma awards. The nation's highest award of Bharat Ratna was conferred on the late M.G. Ramachandran, who was Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, and was received by his widow, Janaki Ramachandran.

Earlier, the Bharat Ratna had been conferred posthumously on Lal Bahadur Shastri in 1966 and Kamaraj in 1975. Ramachandran was chosen for the nation's highest decoration in recognition of his commitment to national unity and for his effective role in bringing round the LTTE for discussions relating to the ethnic problem in Sri Lanka. Rajiv Gandhi had told me that Ramachandran was mainly instrumental in bringing round Prabhakaran and the LTTE to accept the Indo–Sri Lanka agreement. The criticism voiced

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

in some quarters against the conferment of Bharat Ratna on Ramachandran was based on ignorance of his crucial role in the Indo–Sri Lanka negotiations.

Prominent among those honoured on the occasion were the late Mahadevi Verma, an outstanding Hindi poetess, Sandip Singh Virk, a brilliant police officer from Punjab, film actress Shabana Azmi, noted Bharatanatyam dancer Sudharani Raghupathi, Test cricketer Mohammed Azharuddin, and the only Indian chess Grandmaster Viswanathan Anand. The ceremony was followed by tea where the guests and the awardees mixed freely and exchanged greetings and pleasantries.

On February 21, I delivered the customary address to both the Houses of Parliament. Though under the Constitution the purpose of this address is to inform Parliament of the causes for its summons, a practice of giving a detailed account of all aspects of administration had developed during the later years. This address is prepared by the Cabinet and forwarded to the President for information and suggestions, if any. I went through the address and the only suggestion I made was to change the expression, "My Government" into "The Government". The practice of using "My Government" has been inherited from the British Crown. In England power came to the people by devolution of authority from the sovereign over a long period. Technically the sovereign is the fountainhead of all powers and those powers had passed on to the people by a long-drawn process. Hence the Crown calling the government, whichever political party may be in control, as "My Government" has some validity.

But in a Constitution framed by the people themselves through the Constituent Assembly, the powers of the President, Prime Minister, etc., are given by the people. The Preamble to the Constitution states: "We, the people of

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

India... do hereby adopt, enact, and give unto ourselves this Constitution." I therefore felt that it was incongruous for the President of the Indian Republic to call the government "My Government". Since the entire address is a statement of government policies and programmes, I left it to the government to present it in the form and manner it preferred. But I did regret the fact then and with subsequent government drafts of these addresses, that they read like a dry catalogue of the work of different departments. In fact, the drafts contain the kind of recital of facts that should find place only in the Demand-For-Grants of different Ministries. In the Nehru era, the addresses were much crisper and to the point like speeches of the British monarch which are just a couple of pages long, setting out the broad agenda for the session. I am not dealing with such addresses further since my part in them was next to nothing.

There were some Press reports that the Left parties wanted to boycott the President's address. But I took no notice of it as it was not my address but the address of the government delivered through the President. In all my years in Parliament I had felt that the President's address to both the Houses of Parliament was an anachronism emanating from our erstwhile rulers. Equally meaningless was the criticism of the President by the Press and the public for the contents of the address.

On February 23, I visited the Paunar Ashram of Vinoba Bhave in Wardha and the Gandhi Kutir at Sewagram. These visits were arranged at my request as I wanted to pay homage to the patron saints of our liberation movement as early as possible after assuming the office of the President. Addressing the Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences at Sewagram, which is run by the dedicated Gandhian, Dr. Sushila Nayar, I pointed out that the developed countries faced shortage of manpower and hence all their R&D was

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

directed towards the reduction of personnel through automation, robotics, etc., while induction of such technologies in developing countries accentuated unemployment. I decried the debate on large-scale versus small-scale and rural industries as an ideological ritualism.

While in Bombay, on February 25, I paid a call on the veteran national leader, Morarji Desai, then in his early nineties. I had a great regard for Sri Morarji*bhai* for his ability and integrity; even when relations between Kamaraj and Morarji*bhai* were not nappy, I always maintained cordial relations with him. He was very happy over my selection for the Presidentship and blessed me and my wife when we called at his residence. He was in fine health despite his age and as spotlessly dressed in white khadi as he had always been. We spent about 15 minutes with him chatting about his routine and his health.

I also visited Mani Bhavan, the historic headquarters of Mahatma Gandhi during the freedom struggle, and spent 45 minutes there going round the library, reading room, museum and the room that used to be occupied by Gandhiji. It was from this house that Gandhiji launched his Civil Disobedience movement in 1931. Usha Mehta, Secretary of the Museum, said apologetically that there was no lift and wondered if I could go up to the second floor. Her doubts were dispelled when she found me moving several steps ahead of others. I expressed deep appreciation for the dedication with which the Gandhian workers were carrying on Bapu's traditions. I was told that after Rajendra Prasad, I was the first President to visit Mani Bhavan. Recording my impressions, I wrote, "A visit to Mani Bhavan is re-education. It brings back all the memories of the days Gandhiji lived and served not only India but all mankind...."

A grand function was organised by the R.K. Karanjia Felicitation Committee in Bombay to honour Russi Karanjia

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

on his completion of fifty years of service as editor of *Blitz*. It was also his 75th birth anniversary. The participation of Atal Behari Vajpayee of the BJP, Mohit Sen of the CPI, the then Chief Minister of Maharashtra S.B.Chavan and Congress leader Sharad Pawar enhanced the importance of the occasion. Karanjia had fearlessly exposed the mistakes and misdeeds of those in authority. He had built up a unique position for the journal.

Speaking on the occasion I complimented Karanjia on his completing fifty years of "free, frank and fearless" journalism. I said that the Press in India had been well established and that its very strength added responsibilities to it to preserve high standards. While the Press could play a major role in cleansing public lives it should also see that if the pen should write and if the broom should clean, it must itself be free from all impurities. I also cautioned that "care should be taken to see that gossip does not pass for news and slander for views," and that the journalistic profession should attach "as much value to integrity as it did to journalistic independence". I praised *Blitz* for its sustained support to the two pillars of free India — socialism and secularism — and for the bridges it built between India, Eastern Europe and the U.S.S.R. The meeting was attended by the elite of Bombay.

On February 26, Upendra, Member of the Rajya Sabha, wanted to make a special mention about excess expenditure by the Governor of Andhra Pradesh, and the Chairman, Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma, permitted it. However, when Upendra started making his submission, Union Ministers M.M. Jacob and K.K. Tewari raised objections that a discussion in the legislature on the conduct of Governors was barred. Dr. Sharma tried to explain that the subject matter for discussion was the excess expenditure and that he had permitted a special mention. But Salve and

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Chidambaram continued to object until at last Dr. Sharma offered to quit office. During all this time the Prime Minister was in the House and did nothing to stop the unseemly scenes. Apparently he thought the objection was tenable. Earlier, when I was Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, I had permitted Upendra to make a special mention in general terms on the tours and fund-raising activities of Governors, though there was an implicit reference to the Governor of Andhra Pradesh. The matter went off unnoticed.

It is a pity that those who caused such a furore in the Rajya Sabha were not aware that the Governors (Emoluments, Allowances and Privileges) Act, 1982, provides that excess expenditure by Governors approved by the President should be placed before the Houses of Parliament and that any matter placed before the House could be discussed on an appropriate motion. I pointed this out to Dr. Sharma in my letter dated March 2, 1988, and sent a copy to the Prime Minister so that he could stop the unedifying spectacle of the Treasury benches confronting the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha.

The Defence Investiture Ceremony is an important occasion in Rashtrapati Bhavan. Brave and gallant officers of the Defence Services and exceptionally courageous civilians are decorated on this day. That year a large number of people who had distinguished themselves in the Indian Peace-Keeping Force (IPKF) in Sri Lanka received awards, some posthumously and others personally. Senior officers like Lt. Gen. Rodrigues and Vice-Admiral Ramdas, who later became Chief of the Army Staff and Chief of the Naval Staff respectively, were honoured with PVSM (Param Vishist Seva Medal). There was a poignant scene when widows received the honours for the gallantry of their husbands.

On April 6, the nation celebrated the anniversary of the historic Dandi March undertaken by Mahatma Gandhi as

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

part of the freedom struggle. I participated in the ceremony at Dandi, the tiny historic coastal village in South Gujarat. Speaking on the occasion, I said: "I have come here not as the President of India but as a pilgrim. If Gujarat has two outstanding *Dharmakshetras*, in Somnath and Dwaraka, it has two outstanding *Karmakshetras* in Sabarmati and Dandi. The great *Purushottama* of our times taught us that work was worship." The function was attended by Gujarat Governor R.K. Trivedi, Chief Minister Amarsinh Choudhury, Rajasthan Chief Minister Shiv Charan Mathur, former Chief Minister Jagannath Pahadia and a host of freedom fighters. The fervour of those who had gathered at the historic site revived memories of the heroic struggle for freedom.

Sasangir is one of the finest wildlife parks I have seen. Asian lions, a rare species, have been very carefully preserved and protected. On my visit, once, I came across a pride of seventeen lions and cubs majestically stretching across the road. The State Agriculture Minister who had accompanied me told that although he was a resident of the district and had visited the park several times, he had never seen such a large pride of lions and cubs. Even as we were staring at the king of the forest, His Majesty was also looking at us with benign condescension! On our way back we paid a brief visit to Dhaman village, a "Negro" settlement in the Lion Sanctuary area. The story goes that one of the former rulers of the erstwhile Junagadh state brought these "Negroes" as servants and that they had continued to live there for generations.

The celebration of Adi Sankara's birthday at Vigyan Bhavan on April 21 was unique in many respects. The President, the Vice-President and the Prime Minister participated in the function. Though there is no protocol against their appearing together, this has become a rarity for security reasons. To celebrate the "birthday" of one of the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

greatest of the world's philosophers, a committee was formed with the Prime Minister as the chairman. During the celebration there was controversy over the date of birth of Adi Sankara. The present Sankaracharya of Kanchi, Kamakoti Peetam is the 68th Acharya in the unbroken chain of successive pontiffs since Adi Sankara. According to him, the date of Adi Sankara should be placed centuries before Christ. The other school holds that Adi Sankara's life and times could be placed around the 8th century AD. We got over the controversy by naming it merely as Adi Sankara's Birth Celebration.

Speaking on the occasion I said that though Adi Sankara lived in time he was timeless. He was born in Bharatvarsha but his vision was universal and all-encompassing.[1] I spoke on the relevance and necessity of the concept of universal brotherhood and that nations armed to the teeth with weapons of annihilation and howling verses of vengeance against each other could well turn to Sankara for enlightenment.

On April 25, I went to Madurai and unveiled a statue of Kamaraj on the campus of Madurai Kamaraj University. I recalled the immense contribution that Kamaraj had made to the progress of Tamil Nadu during the formative years after Independence. His passion for education, rural communication and electrification, and industrialisation of the State had borne fruit even during his lifetime.

Even as Gandhiji marched with his band of devoted volunteers to Dandi to violate salt laws, his counterpart in South India, Rajaji, who had always been hailed as the South Indian Gandhi, started a march from Tiruchi to Vedaranyam, a coastal village in Thanjavur district. The surviving

[1] Vigyan Bhavan speech at Sankara Jayanthi Mahotsava, April 21, 1988. So may India be great, *Selected Speeches* of Sri R. Venkataraman, Publications Division, 1990.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

participants of the Salt Satyagraha were honoured as part of the 40th anniversary of Independence at Vedaranyam on April 28, 1988.

I also visited my hometown Pattukottai where the public had gathered to felicitate the son of the soil. Situated at the tail-end of the Cauvery-Mettur Canal system, the town was always plagued by shortage of water. Addressing the huge gathering I said that one solution to the water crisis was the linking of neighbouring rivers to form a water grid. I suggested that the Godavari may be linked to the Krishna and then to the Pennar. I took the occasion to endow scholarships for students in the High School in which I studied and also donated my ancestral house in Rajamadam village for the construction of a Primary Health Centre.

On April 28, I went to Annamalai University to declare open its medical sciences building. Paying tributes to the medical profession I said if there was one profession where service came before self it was the medical profession. I appealed to those in the medical profession to find cheaper substitutes for costly drugs, vitamins, and proteins. I deplored the habit of doctors going on strike and thus injuring not only their employers but also the poor patients. I also appealed to the people to help in organising medical relief in rural areas without depending on the government.

In April 1988, I sent an important message to the Prime Minister calling his attention to the report of the Governor of Arunachal Pradesh for the month of January 1988. The Governor had referred to a conflict between Assam and Arunachal Pradesh regarding the border and consequent tension and hostility among the people in the area. In my message I said that it was desirable to find an early solution to border disputes between the States in the north-east. I suggested that if the disputes could not be settled by mutual discussion, the States should agree to nominate an arbitrator

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

each who in turn may nominate an umpire. The parties should agree in advance to accept the recommendations of the arbitrators appointed by each of them and in case of differences between the arbitrators, the decision of the umpire would stand. Rajiv Gandhi replied that he fully shared my concern regarding the Assam–Arunachal border problem and that he had requested the Home Minister to look into it urgently.

Both parliamentarians and State governments had been drawing my attention to the inordinate delay in receiving the President's assent to the bills passed by the States. I saw a reply on this subject in Parliament giving details of 63 such bills awaiting Presidential assent. I have an old habit of clearing all files within 24 hours; but if a file is not submitted by the nodal ministry, the President is powerless. Of the 63 bills pending clearance, 26 were sent back to the State governments for clarification or reconsideration and some were still under examination, in consultation with the Ministries concerned. I wrote to the Prime Minister stating that this has become an irritant in Centre-State relations and that the Sarkaria Commission which had gone into this matter had recommended as a matter of convention that such references should be disposed of within a period of four months. I concluded by saying that it was necessary to evolve a system for expeditious examination and clearance of bills referred to the Centre.

In another note to the Prime Minister I drew his attention to the delay in disposing of mercy petitions. The note ran as follows:

> Recently the Home Ministry had sent two mercy petitions of two persons who had been awarded the sentence of death. Both the cases were from Maharashtra. The criminal cases against the persons concerned had gone through all the stages of judicial process with the dis-

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

missal by the Supreme Court of the review of the sentences of death on 29.7.82 and 15.12.83. The convicts filed petitions for mercy with the State governors which were rejected. Thereafter they submitted mercy petitions to the President, which were forwarded by the State government on 11.1.84 and 28.2.1984 respectively. The cases were sent to me by the Home Ministry with the Home Minister's recommendations in March 1988, i.e., after four years. On enquiry it has been found there are in all 26 such cases pending in the Ministry.

There are not many cases in which the courts award the penalty of death. In fact, the Supreme Court has laid down certain guidelines in this respect and the penalty of death is awarded in the 'rarest of rare' cases. On the other hand, the Court has consistently ruled that if there has been substantial lapse of time from (the) date of award of death penalty, it would be a fit case for protection under Article 21 of the Constitution to be afforded and the penalty commuted into that of life imprisonment. A delay of 2 to 3 years has been considered adequate for invoking this principle. In the present case more than 4 years have elapsed before the files came to the President. Delay in deciding mercy petitions not only inflicts mental torture on the convicts but also compels decision in favour of commutation, even where a penalty of death is otherwise warranted.

The 35th National Film Awards function was held at New Delhi's elegant auditorium, Siri Fort, on May 2. Several stalwarts of the film industry were honoured on that day. The prestigious Dadasaheb Phalke Award was given to the Moghul of the film world, Raj Kapoor. A unique thing about this award to Raj Kapoor was that his father Prithviraj Kapoor was the first winner of the Phalke Award and it is the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

only instance of father and son receiving the highest award. Raj Kapoor came to receive the award even though he was not in the best of health. As the function went on he developed breathing trouble and when his name was called he was not in a position to get up. There was a minor commotion and I enquired what it was about. When I learnt about his physical condition I told Minister H.K.L. Bhagat that I would walk down and present the award to him. There was a burst of applause when I moved to his seat and placed the medal round his neck. As I found he was in a very bad condition I summoned my personal physician and asked him to take Raj Kapoor to the hospital in the Presidential medical van. This gesture was deeply appreciated by the members of the Raj Kapoor family and by the entire audience.

Among other stars who were honoured were Kamala-hasan, as the best actor, Archana as the best actress and Manjunath as the best child artist. The eminent director, Adoor Gopalakrishnan, bagged the best director award. Speaking on the occasion I expressed regret that a wonderful instrument like the cinema has been misused by some people for the sake of the box office. I said that the Indian ethos should not be sacrificed for monetary gain and that the tendency to exploit sex and violence for box-office success should be restrained both by the individual producers as well as by the industry itself by adopting voluntarily a code of conduct.

Dr. Najibullah, President of Afghanistan, undertook a three-day visit to India, to strengthen relations between the two countries. At the customary banquet on May 4, I said that India had followed with great interest the Afghan President's efforts to evolve a national consensus for peace and stability in Afghanistan. I particularly referred to the offer of the Afghan President to form a coalition Government

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

consisting of rebels and refugees from Afghanistan scattered in many countries. By this, I indicated India's support for broad-basing the Afghan Government by including the dissidents and opposition groups. The Afghan President in his reply stated that he was prepared to invite representatives of all Afghan groups living anywhere in the world to a nationwide peace assembly. He said that the Afghan Government would not attach any precondition for their participation. Dr. Najibullah thanked profusely both India and the Soviet Union for the sustained support to Afghanistan.

On May 10, I unveiled a bronze statue of Rukmini Devi on the Kalakshetra campus in Madras. She was a legendary figure even during the British days. Starting her career in the Theosophical Society she became the President of the All India Federation of Young Theosophists and President of the World Federation of Young Theosophists. She impressed the entire world as the living embodiment of the culture of India which Dr.Annie Besant venerated and wished to protect against debasement. She started Kalakshetra and made it a temple of culture. Like Tagore's Santiniketan and Mahatma Gandhi's Sabarmati, Rukmini Devi's Kalakshetra has emerged as one of the springs of Indian culture and traditions. Dr.P.C. Alexander, the Governor of Tamil Nadu, presided over the function.

Participating in a function at the Sankara Higher Secondary School in Madras I condemned the practice of charging capitation fee for admission to schools and colleges. I said, "If I had the authority of a dictator I would have abolished all schools which collected capitation fees." I added, "It is far better to have fewer schools with better standards than institutions thriving on immoral behaviour." I further commented, "Most of the schools have become business houses as people invested a little money and set up

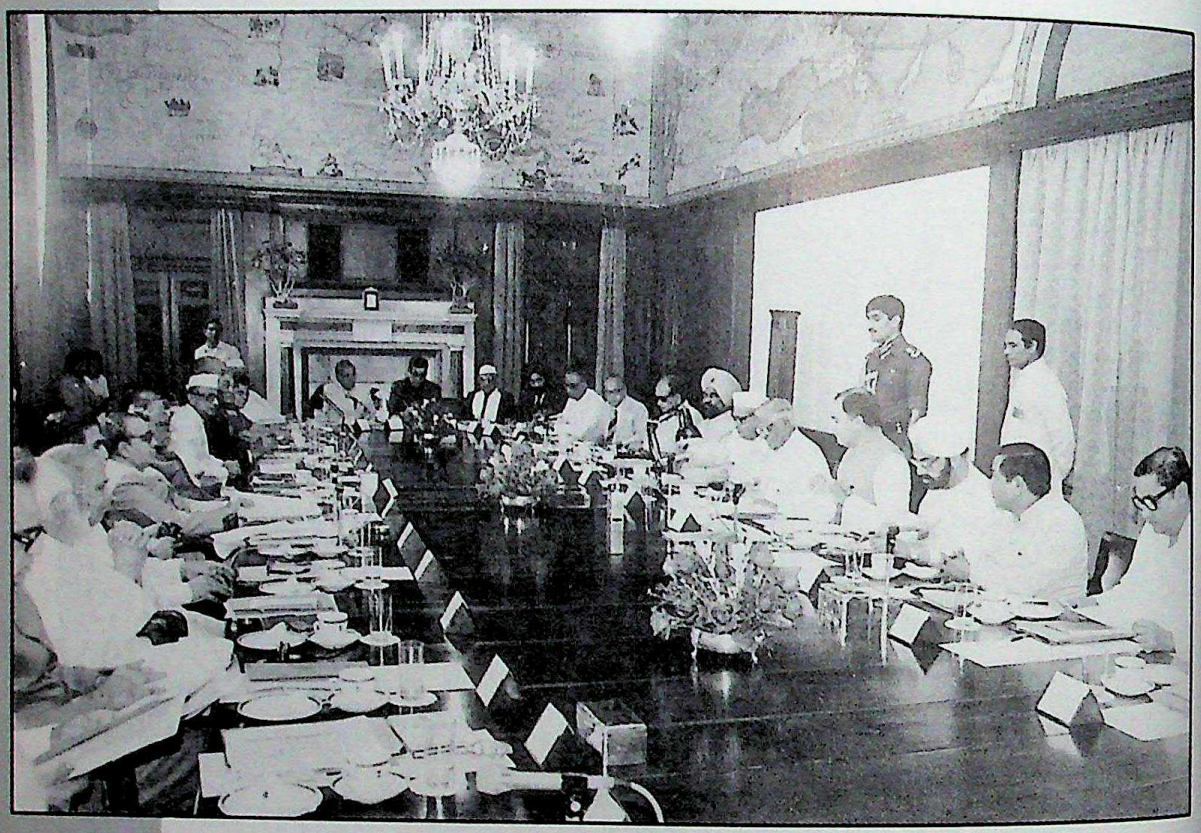
CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Unveiling Indira Gandhi's portrait.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu



Governors' Conference. (29.10.87).

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Rajiv Gandhi handing over his resignation to the President (29.11.89).

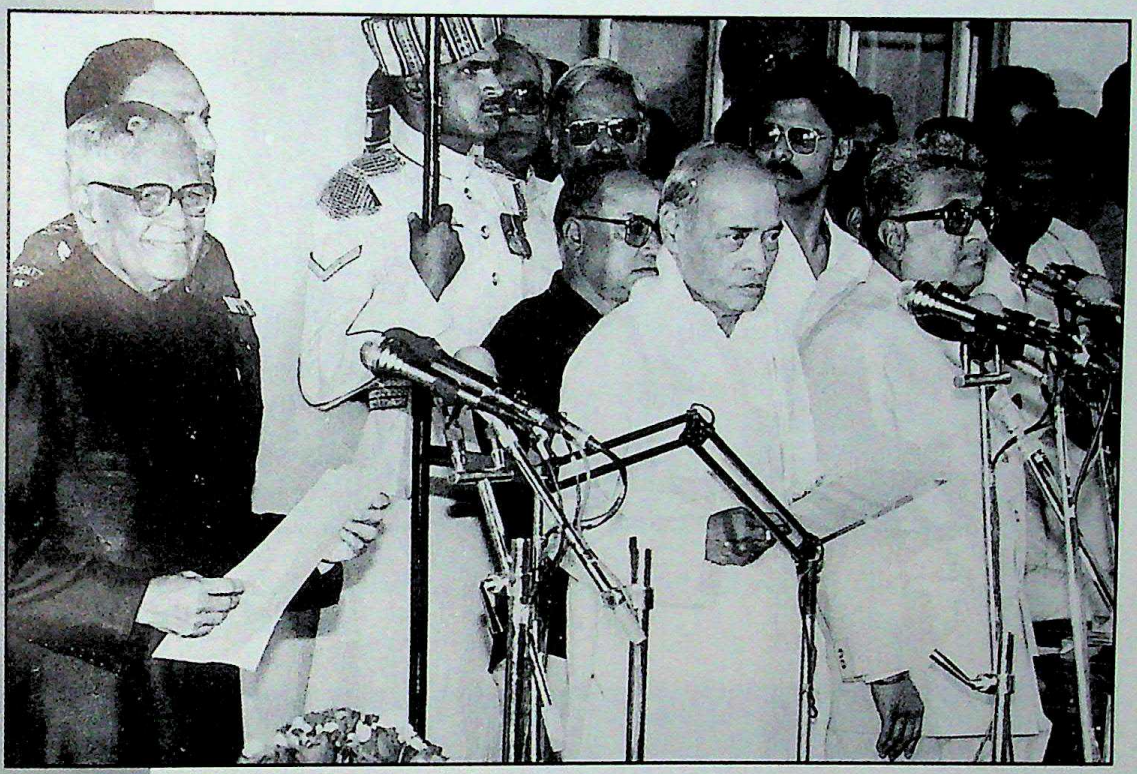
CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Swearing in V.P. Singh as Prime Minister (2.12.89).

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

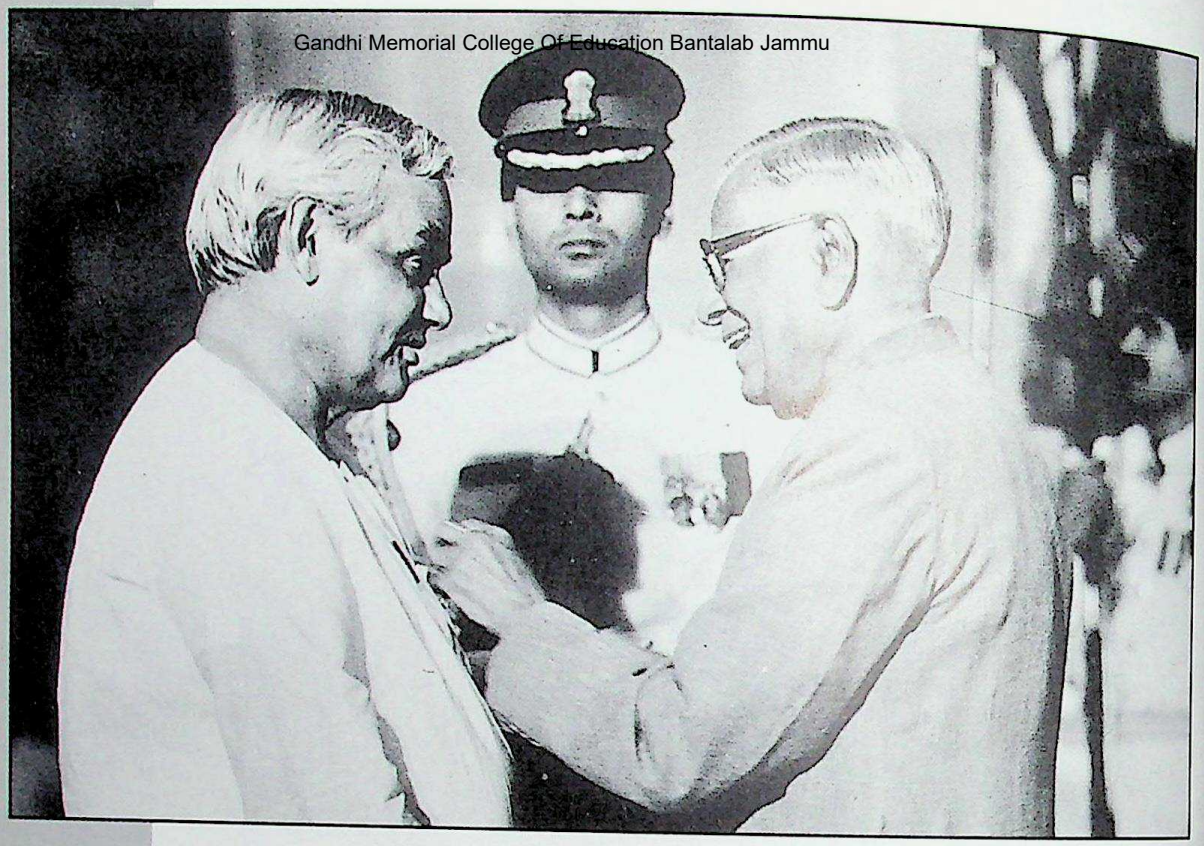
Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu



Swearing in P.V. Narasimha Rao as Prime Minister (21.6.91).

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu



Padma Vibushan Award to Atal Behari Vajpayee.

Speaker Shivraj Patil presenting the farewell momento.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

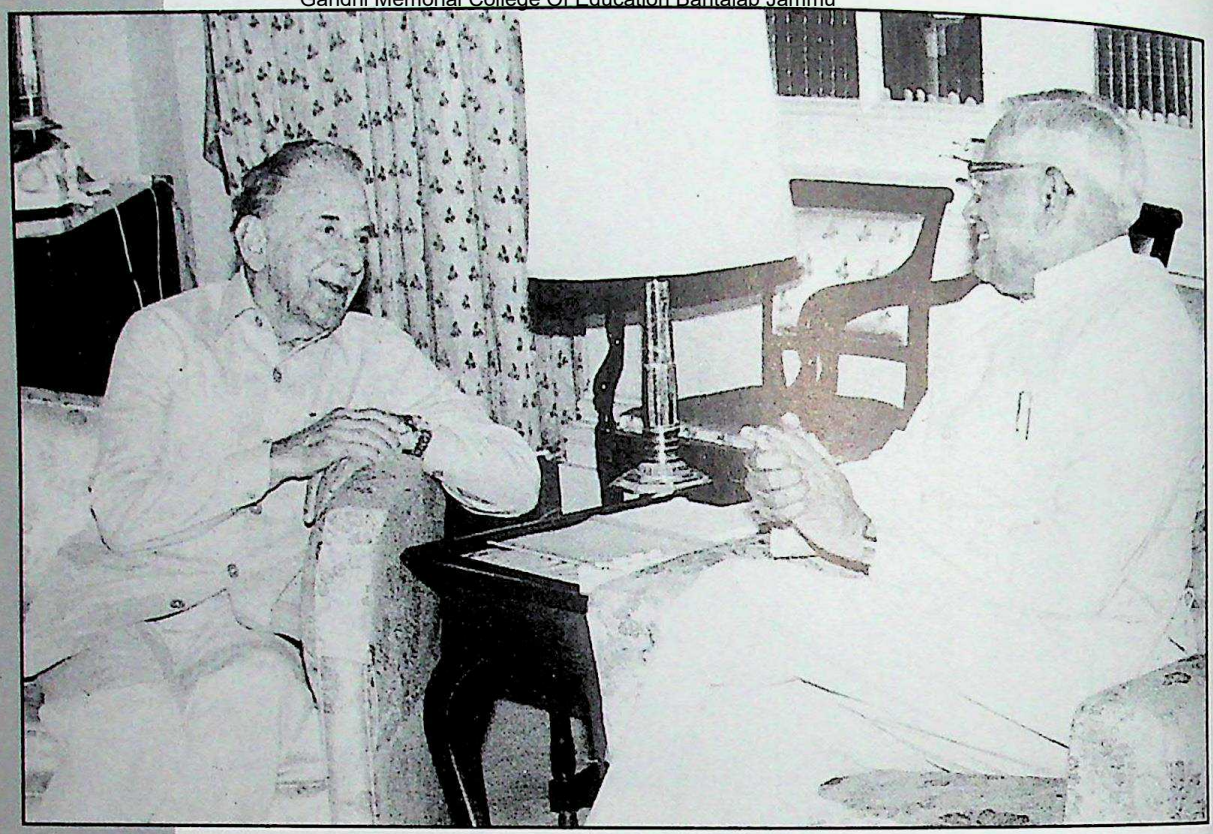
Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

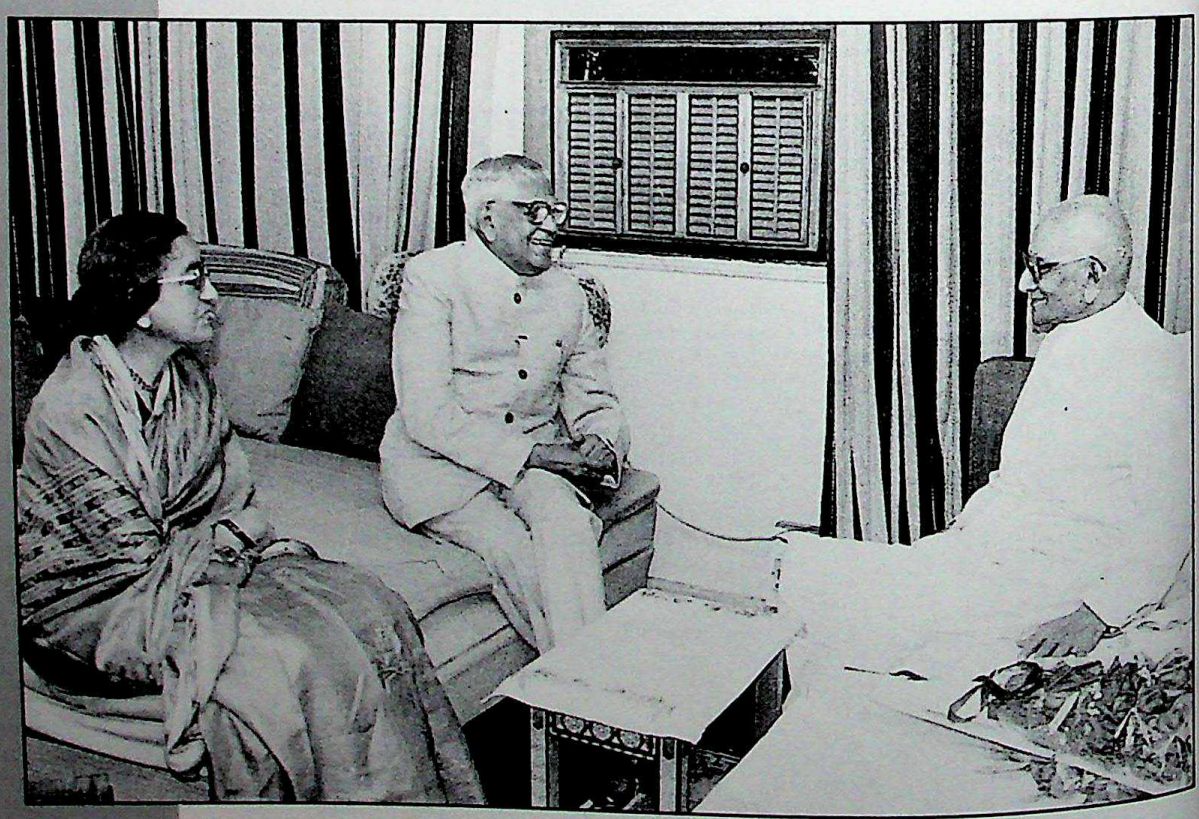
left: With the late Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran.

below: With Jayalalitha, Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

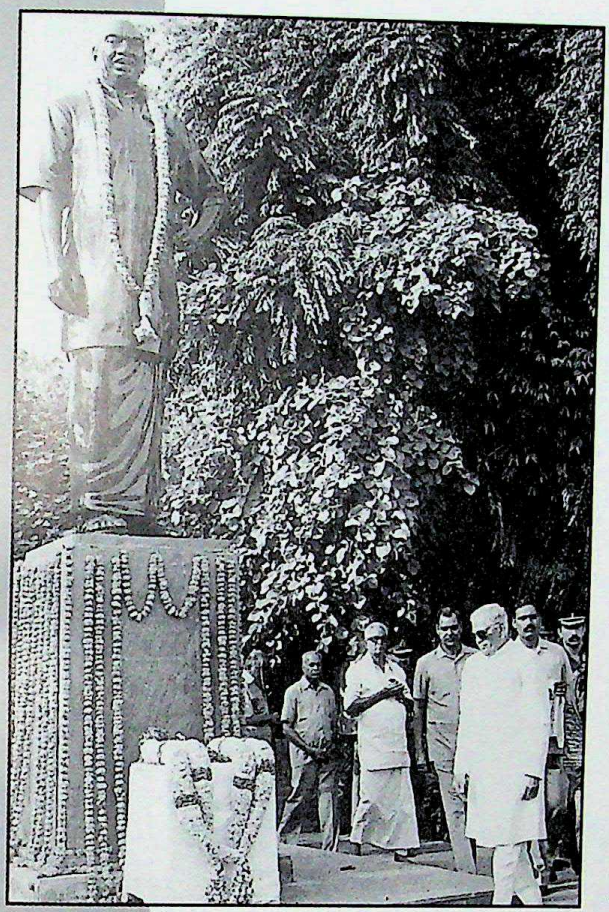




top: With J.R.D. Tata. *below:* With Morarji Desai.

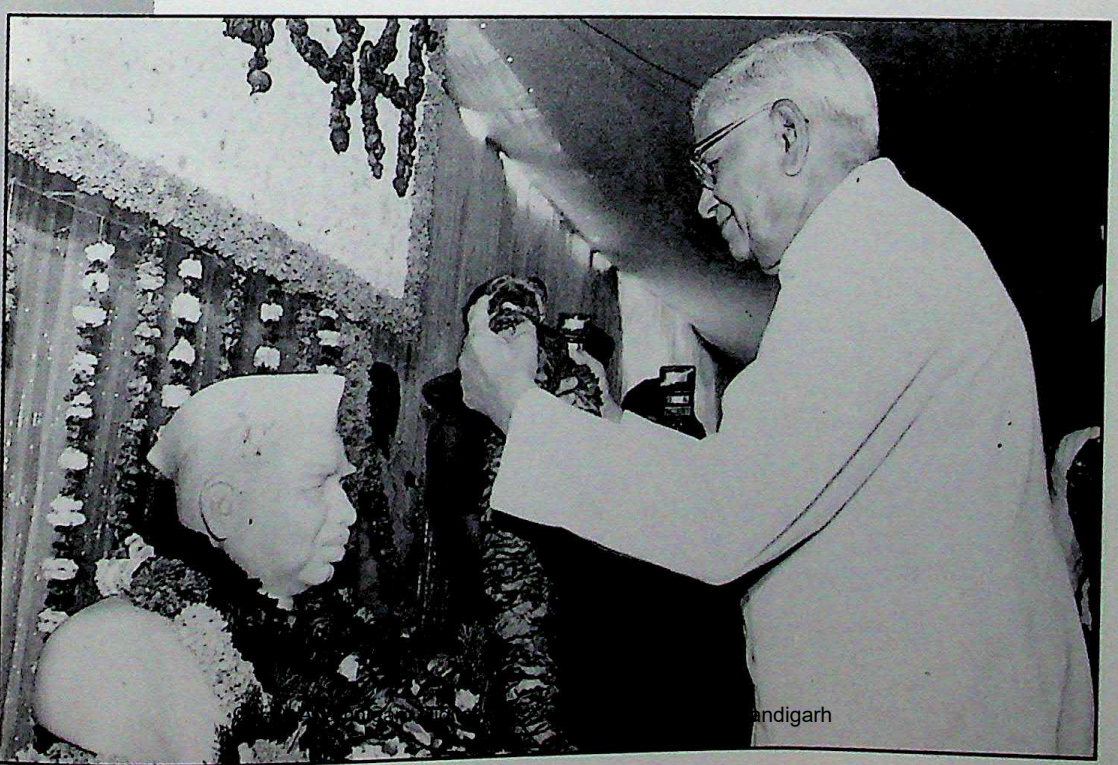
CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu



left: Garlanding the statue of Kamaraj.

below: Paying tributes to Babu Jagjivan Ram –*Anjali* (1989).



andigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

With Mother Teresa.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

educational institutions only to make huge profits by extorting money from the parents." Emphasising the importance of morality and culture I suggested that the school should run moral instruction classes for an hour every week. Instead of teaching A for apple, B for bat and C for cat and D for dog, we should teach A for Allah, B for Buddha, C for Christ and D for Durga so that the children may become familiar with the unity of religions.

Ever since I first visited the planetarium in New York in 1953, I had been very keen to establish one in Madras. As Industries Minister in Tamil Nadu I tried to persuade the late G.D. Birla to establish a planetarium. However, it did not fructify. But in 1988 Chandrakant Birla, a grandson of B.M. Birla, constructed a planetarium near the Anna Technological University and asked me to dedicate it to the nation.

I recalled on that occasion Nehru's invaluable contribution for the creation of a scientific temper in the country. I pleaded for a greater interaction between industry and research institutes for eliminating avoidable imports and building up national self-reliance.

On May 25, I delivered in Madras the first Krishnamurti Memorial Lecture under the auspices of the Krishnamurti Foundation of India. I have been a great admirer of J. Krishnamurti, right from my college days. During his last few years I met him regularly when he came to India. I was also a member of the J. Krishnamurti Trust in Madras. In my lecture I said that Krishnaji was a unique teacher though he never considered himself one and resented being called a guru. He seldom answered questions but always put counter-questions in order to excite in the questioner a thought process that would lead him to find an answer.

I remember once asking Krishnaji whether there was no solution to human misery in the shape of war, violence, destruction and exploitation of man by man. Krishnaji in his

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

usual manner put a counter-question asking me what my problems were. I had just then retired from the Planning Commission and was out of any public office. I told Krishnaji that I had no problems. I did not covet wealth or office and that I had no disappointments. Then Krishnaji asked me, "Why could not all other human beings be the same like you?" He added that if it were so there would be no problem in the world.

Krishnaji was a philosopher of philosophers, a teacher of teachers and at the same time, a comrade, a friend and a fellow thinker. Krishnaji had a laser-like insight into human behaviour and mental reaction. He strongly opposed caste, creed, race and religious differences and tried to instil among all his followers and admirers the spirit of universal brotherhood.

The Industrial Estates at Guindy and Ambattur were established during my term as Minister for Industries, Madras. On May 13, 1988, I participated in the Silver Jubilee celebrations of the Industrial Estate at Ambattur. I stated that a measure of control and regulation was necessary during the era of post-war shortages and that they were no longer relevant after the shortages had ceased. I said that the time had come even in the 1960s for dismantling the regime of controls. I pointed out that the only problem faced by the country was the shortage of foreign exchange and therefore industries which did not require foreign exchange either for capital goods or for raw materials should be freed from control and licensing regulations. I also emphasised the need for farming out the manufacture of ancillaries, components and parts to small-scale industries, so that the large-scale industry might utilise its resources for increasing production and productivity of the final product. I appealed to the Industrial Estate Manufacturers' Association to plant at least ten thousand trees every year in the Industrial Estate and

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

turn it into an industrial park.

During one of our talks, Rajiv Gandhi mentioned the hurdles in the way of implementing land reforms. He said that lands had been falsely distributed in the names of several people in order to escape land ceilings. I mentioned that this evil practice was the result of a loophole in our law, namely, the recognition of *benami* ownership of any property by the courts. I pointed out to him that this led to evasion of taxes also. I suggested enactment of a law barring the plea of *benami* ownership before courts.

Several months later a proposal to issue an ordinance captioned "Benami Transactions" (Prohibition of the Right to Recover Property) Ordinance, was submitted to me for approval. This was one of the few ordinances which was widely welcomed. Likewise, on May 26 an ordinance to check the misuse of religious institutions for political and criminal purposes was promulgated under my seal. In view of the mounting terrorism in Punjab and misuse of shrines by terrorists and anti-social elements for storing weapons and committing criminal acts, the Government came up with an ordinance prohibiting storing of weapons, carrying on subversive activities and creating enmity, hatred and ill-will among different religions. The ordinance also provided for severe penalties for these offences.

I have always had a system by which every letter addressed to me is put up by my staff to me. For convenience, ordinary letters are opened and put up, while letters marked 'personal' or 'confidential' are put up unopened. But I have insisted that my *dak*, as it is called in the north or *tappal* in the south, reaches me. This pays dividends; for then I do not miss even something which my office may regard as unimportant. Once I received a heart-rending letter in Urdu from one who described himself simply as a resident of Amritsar. The letter, captioned "Bloodbath in Punjab", stated:

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

"It seems the news of continuous shedding of human blood in Punjab does not reach the Rashtrapati Bhavan. Even the wails of old, handicapped parents do not penetrate the citadels of the Rashtrapati Bhavan.... Even the shrieks of young widows of 20-22 years do not reach you.... Students have been burnt alive along with their families by terrorists because they were not prepared to allow their children to join the terrorists.... In the sub-division of Taran Taran, Ajnala, Patiala, etc., no writ of the Punjab Government or the Government of India runs any longer.... They have converted the Durbar Saheb of Amritsar into a very safe hideout. They have made the capital in district Amritsar. They have conquered (the) area of district Gurdaspur. There, it is now the rule of terrorists.... Therefore, respected Sir, please think about the fate of this State immediately." A footnote stated that the appeal should not be left to the fate of a file. It should be treated as an SOS and given due consideration. This letter further gave the following suggestions:

(1) Strongholds of terrorists should be attacked with full force and the border sealed. If the Government of India did not take immediate action, the situation would become worse.

(2) People rendered homeless should be accommodated in government buildings and provided financial help.

I have given an excerpt from this tale of horror since the situation in Punjab was worse than what appeared in the daily press. I sent this letter to the Prime Minister in order to apprise him of the situation on the ground.

Viceroys used to stay in the Viceregal Lodge, Simla, and spend the weekend in a lovely mansion set in idyllic surroundings of snow-clad mountains on one side and thick forests on the other. This place, called "The Retreat", is

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

situated at Mashobra village, 15 miles outside Simla. Rajendra Prasad continued the practice of the Viceroys and stayed in The Retreat for one month every year. Thereafter, the succeeding Presidents visited The Retreat off and on but no systematic sojourn was organised. As a result, "The Retreat" had deteriorated considerably. I decided to revive the practice of a sojourn in Simla.

On May 20, members of my family and I left for Simla. We decided to travel from Kalka to Simla by the Mountain Railway so that we may have a full view of the scenic beauty of the hills. The Kalka-Simla Railway was very much like the Mettupalayam-Ooty Mountain Railway, chugging slowly upwards. Midway between Kalka and Simla there is a long tunnel at the end of which there is the railway station 'Barog'. We had a splendid Himachali lunch at this place served by the Himachal Tourism Development Corporation. We enjoyed the Himachali food so much that I decided to have two of our cooks trained in their preparations for Rashtrapati Bhavan banquets. We were received in Simla by Governor Rachiah and Chief Minister Veer Bhadra Singh. After the ceremonial parade, we moved into The Retreat.

We were instantly struck by the enchanting environment and the lovely garden and lawns. An old gardener told me that Nehru used to sit on the lawns and face the east, gazing at the far off mountains, lost in reverie. I found The Retreat a dream house. It looked bright and spic and span after the recent renovation.

During our sojourn in Simla I had organised my work in such a way that in the mornings we went trekking, sight-seeing and visiting places and in the afternoons I disposed of the files that came from Delhi every day at noon. Again in the evenings we went on visits or fulfilled engagements. One morning we went on a pony ride on a hill track. Another day we visited Tatta Pani, a village on the banks of the Sutlej, and

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

saw the sulphur springs. We admired the majesty and turbulence of the Sutlej for which it was well known. I was told that Rajendra Prasad was the only President who had visited Tatta Pani before me.

On the evening of May 24 I paid an unscheduled visit to the Ridge in Simla. Breaking all security arrangements, hundreds of tourists and residents crowded around me and shook hands, took photographs and spoke to me. Children crowded around me and wanted to have pictures taken. They were all thrilled to have met their President. I also visited Dharmashala where Tibetan refugees are accommodated. Here we paid homage to the soldiers who had laid down their lives in the 1947, 1948, 1965 and 1971 wars against Pakistan and in the 1962 conflict with China. There is a beautifully constructed War Memorial with fountains and flowers all round. I laid a wreath and lit the flame ceremonially. The Dalai Lama who stays in Dharmashala called on me and spoke generally about the refugees and their problems. The local people were, however, unhappy with the Tibetan refugees. They felt that the refugees were not mixing with the local population and were an exclusive community. They did not buy local goods but got their requirements from outside since they were getting substantial assistance from world refugee organisations. Obviously, the comparative affluence of Tibetan refugees caused a lot of heartburn among the weaker sections of the local population.

Narkanda is another beauty spot in Himachal Pradesh. The Circuit House is located on a small hillock overlooking the valley. From the front yard of the Circuit House, we could see the snow-clad mountains, dazzling like mammoth diamonds under the sun's rays. There are lovely walks around the hill and many people trek in this area. We spent the day walking up and down and enjoyed the scenery.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Chail' is a hill resort about 45 km from Simla. The former Maharaja of Patiala had built a lovely palace, now converted into a hotel by the Himachal Tourism Development Corporation. This is exquisitely furnished and immaculately maintained. The garden around the palace had a wide variety of colourful flowers. We met a lot of people in the garden as well as at the hotel. What struck me was that they were happy and contented, exuding warmth and friendship. The late Maharaja of Patiala was a great cricketer who represented India in Test Matches. They had put up a cricket field at an altitude of 8,000 feet! I was told that it is the only cricket field at this altitude. I had known the Maharaja personally and had stayed with him in Rome when he was our Ambassador there.

We spent two days in Manali which, in my opinion, is far more attractive than Simla. The silver-clad mountains, the Beas river nestling at the foot of the hills and the sulphur springs at Vashist have a charm which is unique. Nehru liked this place very much and used to stay in Manali for a few days every year. The crockery and cutlery used by him and his photographs in tribal attire are all preserved in the Government Guest House. Himachal was the home of the Pandavas and many places bear names of Mahabharata personalities. The Vyasa river and the Vashist bath are only a few among them. There is an institute for the study of snow and avalanches and an experimental centre carrying on research in this field. Experts demonstrated to us the measures taken to arrest avalanches. The Rohtang Pass is both a joy and a despair of man. Situated at an altitude of 13,050 feet, this pass is snow-bound for seven months in a year. The Border Roads Organisation has to work strenuously to clear the pass for traffic every year after snowfall. The village of Keylong situated on the other side of the pass is cut off for seven months in the year without

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

communication with the rest of the world. This is the only pass through which traffic can be maintained to Srinagar in Kashmir. During my tenure as Defence Minister I had initiated a scheme for a tunnel through the mountain to the other side, viz., Lahoul and Keylong. From the strategic point of view, this tunnel will open an all-weather route to Leh and to the sensitive borders of Kashmir. When I visited Keylong by helicopter, people turned up in large numbers and displayed their tribal dances and martial arts. There was cheering when I said that the tunnel scheme had been accepted by the goverment in principle and that initial work had been started.

Neither at the Rohtang Pass nor in Leh around 14,000 ft. in altitude did I have any breathing problem or need oxygen. It was indeed a surprise to many that I could walk, climb and move about without difficulty in the pass while even those accustomed to the life there needed a spiked walking stick.

The Mayor accorded a civic reception to me in Simla. It was a grand show in the Ridge where over 10,000 people had gathered. Addressing the people I complimented them on their quiet and peaceful life, their discipline and orderliness and their gentleness and friendliness. In fact, Himachal has the lowest crime rate and is completely free from any religious friction.

During my stay I also addressed the students of Bishop Cotton School, Simla, established 160 years ago. The excellent tradition of this institution was fully in evidence in the orderly behaviour of students, their excellence in studies and pre-eminence in sports. I spoke to them about the spectacular progress made by India in science and technology, space research, telecommunications, etc. I said that along with material progress, people should develop patriotism, discipline and a spirit of tolerance and service to fellow men. I concluded by appealing to the younger

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

generation to respect our ancient civilisation and culture which have come down to us over millennia. Later I visited the Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, which is housed in the old Viceregal Lodge. The Viceregal Lodge in Simla is a magnificent building with the choicest teak panelling and dance floor, palatial bedrooms and princely toilets. It was given away by President Radhakrishnan to the Indian Institute of Advanced Studies. With the parsimonious grant given to the Institute, it was unable to maintain this palatial building and the grand historical mansion deteriorated year after year. During my visit to this Institute as Minister for Defence in 1983, I was horrified at the poor shape of the building. I had then mentioned to Indira that the Viceregal Lodge could be used as Raj Bhavan of Himachal Pradesh so that this historic building was properly maintained and preserved. Instead, the Himachal Government launched a costly scheme for the construction of a new Raj Bhavan. When in May 1988 I revisited the Viceregal Lodge, I found it had further deteriorated. Lastly I was not impressed with the quality of the work carried on by scholars. Finally, I paid a visit to the Flagstaff House, headquarters of the Simla Brigade and met the officers in uniform. They were greatly pleased at my ready acceptance of their invitation to visit them. They talked about shifting of the Western Command from Simla to Chandi Mandir, a neighbourhood of Chandigarh, and about the operational advantages of the new headquarters. At the conclusion of my sojourn, I hosted a reception for the elite of Simla. The Governor, the Chief Minister, Cabinet members, Vice-Chancellors, senior retired army personnel and other dignitaries attended the reception. They urged me to make this event an annual one and revive the old practice of a Simla sojourn.

The Retreat has a beautiful orchard and delicious plums, cherries, lichis and apricots grow in abundance. The old

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

apple trees had deteriorated and no new ones had been planted. I directed fresh plantations of apple and other fruit-bearing trees. Apparently, the fruits were all consumed by staff members. This time I sent a box of fruits to the Deaf and Dumb School in Simla, to the Governor, Himachal Pradesh, to the Vice-President and the Prime Minister.

From Simla I wrote to Rajiv Gandhi drawing his attention to the spiralling inflation and said that the Wholesale Price Index of essential commodities during the first three years of the Seventh Plan had moved up by 21.4 percent. I pointed out that the price indices for some of the essential commodities of daily consumption, which affect the poorer sections and on which the common man's perception of the price trend is often based, had moved up very significantly. Thus, the percentage increase during the three-year period was 31 (pulses 21.2, vegetables 53.7 and edible oil 50.5). I suggested that the Government may undertake corrective measures. Some time later Rajiv Gandhi replied that the Government had accorded high priority to controlling inflationary pressures in the economy and that he was asking the Finance Minister and the Minister for Food and Civil Supplies to ensure that the price situation received their close personal attention.

About my stay in Simla, the noted journalist Prem Bhatia had this to write:

"No other President of India except perhaps the late Rajendra Prasad camped in Simla for a whole month during summer. That by itself is a good thing, as a presidential visit becomes the occasion for the house 'The Retreat' in Simla, to get a fresh coat of paint and for the furniture and fittings to receive the much needed attention from the PWD. Other Presidents have gone to Simla in the past for brief visits — rarely extending to a week — to keep specific appointments and not to take residence as in the days of the British Viceroys

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

and the Governor of Punjab....

"In Simla he (R. Venkataraman) went over to the crowded Ridge and, to quote the newspaper reports, mixed freely with the crowd. He seems to have made himself equally accessible when he went across to the nearby resort Chail where he mixed freely with the guests at the celebrated Palace Hotel, which is run by the State Government. Well, that is as close as possible to becoming a people's President, a role which Giani Zail Singh played with even greater abandon."

A delegation headed by Ram Vilas Paswan met me and complained that Nathdwara temple in Rajasthan barred entry of Harijans and that the Sankaracharya of Puri had justified the action. Having been one of the strongest advocates of the Congress Temple Entry Programme I reacted sharply to such archaic practices still persisting in free India. I expressed my strongest support to Paswan. I added that if necessary I would lead the temple entry of Harijans into the Nathdwara temple. The Chief Minister of Rajasthan took note of it and himself organised the entry of Harijans.

During the Prime Minister's meetings with me, we used to discuss not only matters concerning national and international affairs but also many other things concerning life generally. On one occasion Rajiv Gandhi was totally obsessed by the day-to-day problems and was in a depressed mood. I told him that he must take a detached view and should not get involved emotionally in every issue. I also sent him a copy of *Bhaja Govindam* along with Rajaji's English commentary. Rajiv wrote back to me saying, "I am keen to go through it at the very first opportunity."

On July 2, Home Minister Buta Singh called on me to give routine briefing on the law and order situation. He gave an account of "Operation Black Thunder" in the Golden Temple

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

at Amritsar and how the terrorists were flushed out from their hideouts. He also gave an account of the steps taken to counter terrorist menace not only in Punjab but in the neighbouring areas of Delhi and Haryana as well. He was sanguine about gradually deflating the terrorist activities. He also gave an account of his talks with Jyoti Basu, Chief Minister of West Bengal, regarding the agitation by the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) and its chief Subhash Ghising. He was hopeful of finding a solution to the Gorkha problem by constituting some kind of a hill area council with powers to deal with specified subjects. He reported that the law and order situation in Tamil Nadu had strikingly improved, but as President's Rule was expiring on July 29 and as the election notification had not been issued in time, it was necessary to extend President's Rule.

On July 5, leaders of the opposition parties in Parliament presented a memorandum to me demanding a fresh probe into the Bofors gun deal in the light of certain startling disclosures appearing in the well-known and sober daily, *The Hindu*. The deputationists urged that the series of documents published in *The Hindu* totally contradicted the contention of Bofors that no "commissions" were paid and that only "winding up charges" to one of its agents had been given. I politely accepted the memorandum and said that I would study its contents. I however reminded them of the limitations of my office. I passed on the memorandum to the Prime Minister.

On July 28, there was a grand and glittering function in which eminent sports persons from Third World countries gathered at Vigyan Bhavan to discuss two subjects — sports in Third World countries and racism in sports. This function was organised by the Sports Authority of India and the Arjun Awardees' Association jointly. Inaugurating the seminar I appealed to the audience to use sports to unite people of

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

different nations and to instil a sense of brotherhood among the people of the world. I condemned racism in sports and apartheid in general. Bishen Singh Bedi, the renowned cricketer and President of Arjun Awardees' Association, explained that the seminar was not merely a get-together but a movement to foster sports. He said that sports personalities who had gathered from over thirty countries would help to enrich the sports culture.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

12

Shortly after my assuming office as President, our Ambassador to the Soviet Union, T.N. Kaul, expressed a keen desire that I should undertake a state visit to the Soviet Union and combine it with the closing ceremony of the Festival of India in Moscow. He said the Soviet authorities remembered my previous visit as Defence Minister and the excellent rapport I had established with their leaders. That visit proved very successful and a large amount of defence supplies were made to us as a result. The Soviet Union reaffirmed during the visit that the Indo-Soviet relationship was a special one, different from routine diplomatic ties between countries.

A few months later Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi spoke about the elaborate arrangements being made by the Soviet Union for the concluding session of the Festival of India and desired that I should attend it. Rajiv Gandhi felt that my visit to Moscow, at a time when great changes were in the offing in the Soviet Union, would be of immense value to the country. Thereupon in consultation with the Soviet Union it was decided that I should undertake a seven-day state visit to the Soviet Union and a three-day state visit to Mongolia from July 6, 1988.

On July 2, Rajiv Gandhi called on me and discussed matters relating to my visit to the Soviet Union for over an hour. He felt that we should welcome the new policies of

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Perestroika propounded by General Secretary Gorbachev but at the same time discuss repercussions of the new policy on the future of the rupee trade, as also consequences of the rouble becoming a convertible currency. Rajiv thought that these issues should be taken up in my discussions with Gorbachev. Both of us were concerned at the possibility of increased cost of defence supplies as a result of the new economic policies of the Soviet Union.

On the morning of July 6 there was a ceremonial send-off at Indira Gandhi International Airport by a large gathering consisting of the Vice-President, the Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers, Service Chiefs and a large number of members of Parliament. Our entourage consisted of five members including my wife and three family members. The official delegation included K.R. Narayanan, Minister of State of Science and Technology, L.P. Sahi, Minister of State, K.P.S. Menon, Foreign Secretary, and Gopal Gandhi, my Joint Secretary substituting for Prem Kumar, Secretary, who was unable to join Human Resource Development.

At 2 p.m. local time, we landed at Moscow. President Gromyko received us and gave us a warm welcome. I had known Gromyko since the early fifties when he was leader of the Soviet delegation and I was a member of the Indian delegation to the United Nations. We had met quite a few times — thanks to V.K. Krishna Menon. During those days Indian delegates, particularly those in the General Assembly committees, were in close touch with their counterparts in the Soviet delegation. That was decades ago. I was therefore flattered when Gromyko recalled our meetings during the U.N. days.

The reception ceremony was elaborate. Full state honours were accorded to us, with a guard of honour and national anthems of the two countries being played. Soviet

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

children presented bouquets and waved Indian and Soviet flags of welcome. The Indian Embassy officials and members of the Indian community enthusiastically joined in the reception. Moscow airport presented a gay and jubilant atmosphere.

I drove to the Kremlin accompanied by President Gromyko. During the long drive we spoke of those early years of the United Nations, the cold war and the bitterness that prevailed at that time. We were happy that all that had receded and a new spirit of understanding had replaced mutual fear and suspicion. At the Kremlin we were taken to our magnificent apartments, ornate with marble and malachite green stones like jade. The rooms were luxuriously furnished with silk and velvet, the furniture painted with gold and baths fitted with the most modern devices.

As the first round of talks was to begin in half an hour, I had a hurried wash and change of clothes and rushed to the meeting. The first meeting was with President Gromyko in the Catherine Hall of the grand Kremlin Palace. President Gromyko was assisted, among others, by the First Vice-President of the USSR, the President of Kazakhstan, the Deputy Foreign Minister and the Minister for Culture, while our Ambassador Kaul and other members of the Indian delegation were in attendance. President Gromyko expressed pleasure over our visit to the Soviet Union and extended a most cordial welcome. He added that our visit should go a long way to strengthen the excellent relationship existing between the Soviet Union and India.

I thanked the Soviet Union for the warm welcome and generous hospitality showered on us. I complimented the Soviet authorities on their new economic policy and wished them all success. I expressed the hope that Perestroika would

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

further enhance trade and economic cooperation between the two countries. Referring to Afghanistan I expressed regret that despite the Geneva agreement on non-intervention by outside countries, Pakistan was continuing its military support to the Mujahideen rebels and keeping alive civil war conditions in that country. I also referred to the supply of arms and assistance to terrorists in Punjab and Kashmir and to the clandestine nuclear programme undertaken by Pakistan. I welcomed the INF (Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces) Treaty and hoped that it would be followed up with more energetic steps towards nuclear disarmament.

President Gromyko responded warmly to each one of these issues. On bilateral relations he expressed happiness that they had stood the test of time and were poised for greater growth. He referred to the recently concluded Soviet Party Conference which gave a massive support to General Secretary Gorbachev's radical reforms. On nuclear disarmament, the President expressed satisfaction over the INF Treaty but disappointment at the non-acceptance of the Soviet proposal for a fifty per cent reduction in strategic nuclear weapons. President Gromyko welcomed the strengthening of cultural ties between our two countries and the proposal to open an Indian Cultural Centre in Moscow and Tashkent. The meeting lasted an hour and a half and ended at 7.15 p.m. At 8 p.m. there was a state banquet and we had hardly time to change into black ceremonial clothes. It had been a continuous run from the moment we landed in Moscow.

The banquet was held in the palatial Kremlin Hall which is adorned with majestic paintings of Russian artists, past and present. I was attracted by each one of them and I tarried behind while my hosts walked a few steps ahead and waited

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

for me to join them.

According to Soviet practice, toasts are proposed before one starts the dinner unlike the Western system where toasts are proposed during serving of the dessert. I thought the Soviet practice was most convenient and practical and even toyed with the idea of changing the Western pattern in the Rashtrapati Bhavan banquets. But the people in Rashtrapati Bhavan were so horrified at the 'blasphemy' that I quietly let the idea die.

Proposing the toast, President Gromyko deviated from the formal welcome usually accorded on such occasions to visiting dignitaries and showered encomiums on me. He described me as "a veteran trade unionist, jurist, editor, publicist, eminent diplomat, economist and political personage". He added, "It is well known that you have a deep knowledge of how old and how long have been the relations between India and the Soviet Union and you have, in every post you have held and in the position you are now holding, contributed to the strengthening of Indo-Soviet cooperation." President Gromyko laid emphasis on Indo-Soviet cooperation in various fields of activity and paid handsome tributes to the cultural contacts through the Festival of India. He went over many of the points which we had dealt with in the formal discussion earlier in the evening, laying special emphasis on nuclear disarmament, non-intervention in Afghanistan and Perestroika.

Replying to the toast I conveyed the greetings and good wishes of 800 million people of India to the Government and people of the Soviet Union and their thanks for the kind words and sentiments about our country and its people expressed by the Soviet President. "This is not my first visit to this beautiful city and this great country. I have been here on a number of occasions. Each time I have come here I have

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

been overwhelmed by the magnitude of the Soviet Union's progress and its statesmanship," I said. I referred to the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship of 1971 and the historic Delhi Declaration on a nuclear weapon-free, non-violent world and hoped that we would achieve global peace and harmony in our time.

After dinner the Soviet President and I attended a combined musical recital by the Indian violinist L. Subramanian and his Soviet counterpart.

On July 7, I participated in the impressive wreath-laying ceremony at the Lenin Mausoleum. This was the third occasion when I participated in such a function. Earlier in 1966 during my visit along with Kamaraj, the President of Indian National Congress, I had seen the embalmed body of Lenin at the Mausoleum. It is indeed remarkable that despite the lapse of several years Lenin's body has retained the same perfect condition and freshness. There was not even the smallest deviation from the punctilious procedure followed in the ceremony. The Soviets set great store on honouring the tomb of the Unknown Soldier — a memorial to the warriors of World War II. Here, national anthems of both countries were played, followed by a march past by the armed forces. The Soviet Union has installed a statue of Indira Gandhi in Moscow as a gesture of its appreciation of her and friendship with India. I laid the wreath without any formality and stood in silence for a minute.

The delegation members, thereafter, visited the Kremlin armoury which is a permanent exhibition of ancient Russian weapons, jewellery, gems and diamonds that had come down from the days of the Czarist regime. I was deeply impressed with the display of historic relics, gems and jewellery of different periods of Russian history, as well as minerals collected from all over the Soviet Union. Not only

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

was the jewellery breathtaking but also the way it was displayed compelled admiration. It was then that I got the idea to organise a permanent exhibition in Rashtrapati Bhavan, of all old paintings and memorabilia rescued from dungeons and lumber rooms.

In the afternoon I visited the Indian Engineering Exhibition. There was a grand display of several engineering goods, machine tools, manufacturing equipment and ancillaries and components which the Soviets admired and wanted to buy. As they had no free foreign exchange, the Soviet buyers insisted on counter-purchase of Soviet goods to match their purchases. The Indian exhibitors were therefore unable to do much business in that country.

In the evening there was a lively musical programme by Pandit Ravi Shankar and the Soviet music groups which President Gromyko and myself attended. Pandit Ravi Shankar had specially composed what he called "Shanti Mantra", emphasising the Indian spirit of peace.

The Soviet mass media hailed my visit as yet another milestone in the ever-growing friendship between India and the Soviet Union. Most newspapers highlighted on the front page the talks between the Indian and Soviet Presidents. The exaggerated display gave me an impression that the Soviets wanted to demonstrate the special nature of our relations, not only to their countrymen but also to the rest of the world.

On the morning of July 8, there was a solemn function of unveiling a statue of Mahatma Gandhi at the Lenin Hills near the Moscow University. President Gromyko made a short speech paying tributes to Mahatma Gandhi as an apostle of peace and non-violence whose tenets, he said, were relevant even today. He invited me to unveil the statue. In my speech I said that the function was a fitting finale to the year-long Festival of India which aimed at strengthening friendship

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

between the two countries. I recalled that Gandhiji stood for universal brotherhood and for peace and harmony among the nations of the world. I referred to what Mahatma Gandhi wrote about Tolstoy, viz., "He often seemed inconsistent but he was continuously outgrowing his own doctrines. His failures were public; his struggles and triumphs private." I said, these words equally applied to Gandhiji. I concluded by saying that Gandhiji showed us the path of love and brotherhood, peace and fraternity which India and the USSR trod together. There was a markedly Indian flavour to the atmosphere at the ceremony as people sang Gandhiji's favourite song *Vaishnava Jana to*, and chanted Gandhiji's prayer, *Raghupathi Raghava Raja Ram*. The bronze sculpture depicted the famous Dandi March pose and was very well executed.

From this function, we went straight to Kremlin for talks with General Secretary Gorbachev, which was the most important engagement in the visit. Since this meeting was one-to-one, between General Secretary Gorbachev and myself, there were no aides on either side except Ambassador Kaul who accompanied me. We entered the conference hall simultaneously from two ends, met at the middle of the room and exchanged greetings. After a brief photo session we settled down for a discussion in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere.

On global issues like nuclear disarmament there was an identity of views. Gorbachev praised Rajiv Gandhi's initiative at the special disarmament session of the United Nations. He hoped that the Delhi Declaration on the establishment of a nuclear weapon-free and non-violent world would gather momentum and acceptance. On the question of Afghanistan, Gorbachev condemned the violation of the Geneva Agreement and supply of arms by

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Pakistan to the rebel forces. Regarding the new economic and structural changes, Gorbachev wanted more consumer goods to improve the quality of life of the people and more Glasnost (openness) in the society. He added that some elements wanted changes to be at a faster pace but the party would not rush forward without thought. Nor would conservatism and bureaucratism be allowed to slacken the process, he disclosed.

In my presentation, I referred to the arms assistance to terrorists in Punjab and Kashmir and also to the clandestine nuclear programmes pursued by Pakistan. Gorbachev was forthright in his condemnation of Pakistan's interference in the internal affairs of India. He was also appreciative of Rajiv's handling of the Punjab situation. He added that India was strong enough to resist attempts at destabilisation. He welcomed the progress and development of India as it was a major factor for peace and stability in the region and in the world. Gorbachev complimented India on its restraint in handling the terrorist problems and when I said, "Few could excel India's capacity for restraint", Gorbachev remarked "If we find it necessary to contact Pakistan we would certainly consult Rajiv Gandhi and India. This is our policy today, tomorrow and for the future." When I explained our desire to normalise relations with China, Gorbachev responded favourably and talked of the necessities of the changing world situation. I expressed apprehension about the rupee trade between the Soviet Union and India and the possible adverse effect of the new economic structural changes and convertibility of the rouble. Gorbachev replied that these were long-term measures and that they had to make their economy competitive first. Saying that this "would take time," he added, "we are sure that the level of our cooperation with India will enable us to solve any problem

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

that may arise; I can give you this assurance."

The session lasted a little over 90 minutes and both of us hugged each other at the conclusion of the meeting. We were greatly pleased with the outcome of the talks.

The Soviet Union had made elaborate preparations for the closing ceremony of the Festival of India. The vast Olympic indoor stadium had been converted into a fairyland. Over 500 Indian and 500 Soviet artists were busy arranging a spectacular show. Indian dancers, choreographers and artists were competing with each other to steal the show from their Soviet counterparts. Everyone was looking forward to the most important festive event of the visit.

Later, a small problem of protocol presented itself. President Gromyko proposed to read a message from General Secretary Gorbachev, the chairman of the Soviet Festival Committee at the commencement of his address. It was felt that it would be a good reciprocal gesture if I could do the same by reading the message from Rajiv Gandhi, the Indian co-chairman of the festival. Personally I did not see anything wrong in it as the messages on both sides would be from the two co-chairmen of the festivities. Our Foreign Secretary K.P.S. Menon, however, felt that the President, being higher in protocol than the Prime Minister, should not read the message. I felt that it would look odd if the Soviet President read the message at the ceremony and there was none from our side. I also did not countenance the idea of a Minister of State reading the message either before my speech or after. As a compromise I suggested that I would incorporate Rajiv Gandhi's message into my text so that it was not read out separately as a message and this was accordingly done.

The closing ceremony was a dazzling show. After the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

national anthems were played President Gromyko first read the message from General Secretary Gorbachev and made his speech. I followed with my text which incorporated Rajiv's message at the beginning. It was followed by an unending stream of breathtaking events for two hours.

A special feature of the show was the theme of India's past history, freedom movement and economic development, entitled *Shanti Path*. The traditional Bharatanatyam dancers and Anand Shanker's artists in lovely costumes danced with Berioska dancers from Russia in what was called "Ganga-Volga *Milan*." It may be recalled that at the inauguration of the festival in 1987 Gorbachev and Rajiv Gandhi planted two saplings and sprinkled them with the waters of the Ganga and the Volga. When Remo Fernandes sang 'India', flowers were thrown at him from the galleries. Asha Bhonsle's song "I love you all" sent the audiences into ecstasy. Wild scenes of enthusiasm marked the closing act of the festival.

In my address I described the Festival of India in the Soviet Union as a voyage of discovery, of understanding and friendship, and said that it had given to the Soviet people an idea of the many-splendoured image of India. I added that the water of the two great rivers Ganga and Volga "symbolises the self-renewing energy of our two great civilisations." I cited the translations of *Bhagavad Gita* and Kalidasa's *Sakuntalam* into Russian language and the influence of Tolstoy on Mahatma Gandhi as evidence of the continuing interest in each other. Poet Rabindranath Tagore had acclaimed the Great October Revolution of 1917 as "a new era" while poet Subramania Bharati had described it as a "new civilisation". I said that, "If our festival here and your festival in India have succeeded in enriching understanding between our people at the human level, at the intellectual

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

level and between Governments at a political level, we would have truly achieved the objective which we set for ourselves when we launched on these splendid reciprocal initiatives."

I concluded by quoting the *Rig Veda* which said:

Meet together, talk together
May your minds comprehend alike,
Common be your action and achievement
Common be your thoughts and intentions
Common be the wishes of your hearts.

Thus ended the first phase of the state visit. The Soviet Press gave extensive coverage to all the events. *Pravda, Izvestia* and other newspapers highlighted the talks with Gorbachev, the closing ceremony and unveiling of the Mahatma Gandhi statue. The Soviet TV and broadcasting stations gave live coverage to the closing ceremony and reported exhaustively the talks with the Soviet leaders. The newspapers commented that "the simplicity and humility" of the visiting President greatly impressed the people and leaders in the Soviet Union.

At the farewell ceremony, President Gromyko expressed deep appreciation of the Soviet Government and the people for my visit. He also expressed satisfaction over the successful talks between the delegations and the deep understanding that had been achieved between the two countries. I thanked the hosts profusely for their warm and gracious hospitality and for their cooperation and goodwill towards India. I also extended an invitation to President Gromyko to visit India at his earliest convenience.

We arrived by a comfortable Soviet plane in Leningrad on a bright and sunny morning on July 9. We were received by the mayor of the city and a host of other dignitaries.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Someone told me to my great surprise that I was the first Indian President to visit Leningrad. We drove straight from the airport to the Monument for the Heroic Defenders of Leningrad. Leningrad was under siege by the Nazi forces for 900 days during World War II and a million people died of artillery fire, famine and disease. But the people of Leningrad did not relent. Day after day, the Nazis burst propaganda shells in addition to artillery shells, claiming that the city was falling. But it did not.

Next, we paid homage at the 'Piskarobskoya' memorial, a mass grave of the largest number of soldiers and civilians who died in the war. At this memorial stands the granite statue of a woman, the mother of Leningrad, carrying a garland of bones. We were also shown a diary of a little girl giving names of people who died day after day, and it ended abruptly as she also probably died. I heard this story during my first visit in 1959 and found that even after thirty years the story was repeated with the same fervour and poignancy. Children from all over the Soviet Union were regularly taken to this place to instil in them qualities of patriotism, sacrifice and courage in the face of adversity. After paying floral homage I wrote in the visitor's book: "The courage and determination with which the people of Leningrad endured the terrible siege of 900 days are truly moving. We must all rededicate ourselves to the ideal of peace."

In the afternoon we visited the Hermitage, the grand museum of art and jewellery built by Peter the Great who ruled the city in the eighteenth century. In fact the city originally bore the royal name of St. Petersburg and was changed to Leningrad after the revolution. Seventy years later, after the collapse of the communist regime, the city has been renamed as St. Petersburg. The Hermitage is one of the finest museums in the world. Renowned paintings, rich

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

porcelain pieces, gold and gems of the rarest vintage and variety and some of the masterpieces from the rest of the world find a place in this museum. In the evening we drove to Petrodverets, the winter palace of the Czars, and saw the magnificent fountains and gardens. It was like a fairyland. We returned by hydrofoil, a speed boat which skims on the water surface.

The mayor hosted a grand banquet. After complimenting the Soviet Union on its bold experiment with new economic policies, I referred to Leningrad as an important "window" to India. It was in Leningrad that the pioneering Soviet studies on Indology were undertaken. Again, it was Leningraders who translated the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* into Russian and compiled the Sanskrit-Russian Dictionary. During the dinner I sounded the mayor on the new proposals to restrict certain offices to two terms. The mayor responded warmly and said that he had actively supported the idea at the 19th party conference which he attended recently. Similarly there was warm reception to the new changes, from several people whom I sounded casually.

On July 10, we flew into Tashkent. In our talks with the Uzbek leaders we referred to our historical association and to similarities in our culture and traditions. Thereafter we offered flowers at the statue of Lal Bahadur Shastri who died in Tashkent soon after conclusion of the peace agreement with Pakistan.

On July 11, we visited the legendary city of Samarkand. It was from here that Babar embarked to establish the Moghul empire in India. Samarkand looked very much like any Indian city with mud houses, mosques and women wearing *salwar-kameez*. The local host said jocularly that India was part of Samarkand but I replied that since Delhi was the capital of the Moghul empire, Samarkand formed

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

part of India. He enjoyed the joke and quipped, "We belong to each other". Samarkand at one time was a seat of learning and culture. The famous poet Omar Khayyam studied in Samarkand. The "Ulugbeg" observatory is a standing testimony to the excellence achieved by the people of Samarkand in science. People used to observe planetary movements and study the celestial sphere at this observatory. The "Bibi Khanum" grand mosque is a marvellous piece of architecture. Built over a thousand years ago this grand mosque has been renovated and preserved by the Soviets with great pride. There are lovely marble inset pieces resembling those in the Taj Mahal and other Moghul monuments in India.

The people told me an interesting story about this mosque. The queen Bibi Khanum had commissioned renowned artists from all over the world to build this masterpiece and she took a deep personal interest in every detail. When the mosque was completed, she was so struck by its beauty, that she asked the architect to name any gift that he wanted. The architect despised the gold and brocades offered to him but wanted only a kiss from the beautiful queen. Overwhelmed with gratitude the queen turned her cheek to the architect and he implanted a kiss. So great was the ardour and passion of the kiss that it left an indelible mark on her cheek. The king returned from his martial excursions and when he saw the mark he learnt the whole story. He then ordered that all women, including the queen, should wear *purdah*. That was the origin of the *purdah* system, I was told.

Samarkand is a forest of fruits and vegetables. Every kind of fruit of the subtropical region grows in abundance. We were invited to a lunch where the table was studded with fruits of all kinds. There was a dance performance by the local people which resembled an Indian hill tribal dance. Their

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

music also resembled the Hindustani tunes. One girl sang so beautifully that I suggested that she could be sent to the Festival of Soviet Union in India. Later when she came, she did make a very fine impression on the Indian audience.

Speaking at the reception at Samarkand, I said, "To visit this city is to take a walk through history." I referred to the excellence achieved in the Middle Ages by Central Asia in art, architecture, mathematics and medical sciences. When I praised their horticulture and farm products I was told that Samarkand was the principal supplier of fruits and vegetables to Moscow and further north. I was informed that Sawai Man Singh, the Maharaja of Jaipur, built the observatories in India, including the Jantar Mantar in Delhi, on the model of the Ulugbeg observatory in Samarkand. We returned to Tashkent late in the afternoon. The Uzbek President hosted a dinner where we made formal speeches. During my informal talks with the Uzbek leaders I tried to probe their reaction to Perestroika and the accompanying changes. They had a vague idea that under the new system goods would be made available to them in plenty and many restrictions would go. They were conscious that Moscow and the northern areas were more prosperous than Uzbekistan and other Central Asian Republics, but at the same time they realised that they had made tremendous progress since the revolution.

On July 12, we left for the famous lake Baikal via Ulanude, the capital of the autonomous region in Siberia. Lake Baikal is the biggest sweet-water lake in the world. It is over a mile in depth, 350 miles in length and over 30 miles in width at its narrowest point. We went on a boat ride from one shore to the other. The water was crystal clear and very sweet to taste. Through its transparent water, pebbles and stones, including marbles, were visible from the boat. During

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

winter, the water freezes on the surface up to a depth of about eight feet and people drive vehicles on it. However, water remains fluid underneath and fish and other aquatic life continue to live. The river Angrey emanates from lake Baikal and serves as a very long waterway.

After a night's halt on the banks of lake Baikal we left for Ulan Bator at 3 p.m. on July 13. The chairman of the Mongolian Republic, Batmunkh, received us and offered a ceremonial welcome. The parade was very smart and the ceremony impressive. Children with moon faces offered flowers and waved flags. The same evening we laid wreaths at the tombs of Mongolian national leaders. Thereafter we had official talks with the Mongolian delegation.

Mongolia has a deep affinity with India. Since Mongolia was in entire agreement with India's stand on all international issues, the talks were very cordial and the entire one hour turned out to be a session of exchange of compliments.

At the banquet, President Batmunkh said the people and Government of Mongolia fully supported the efforts of the Government of India to defend the country. The President also added that the first ever visit of the head of state of India would further improve the traditional relations between the two countries. The Mongolian President welcomed the Geneva Accord and the Soviet withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan.

In my reply, I underlined the need for international cooperation and strengthening of international institutions which were under great pressure. I called for greater exchange of information on machines, materials, and technologies available with the Third World.

During our stay in Mongolia two agreements were signed: one for exchange of scholars, scientists, researchers

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

and technologists, and the other for cooperation in the field of agriculture. Mongolia mainly depends on breeding sheep and goats and its main income comes from animal husbandry. With a sparse population and vast area available, Mongolia wanted to develop scientific agricultural practices with Indian aid.

While we were having the official talks, my wife and granddaughter Ranjani visited the International Youth Pioneer Camp. They were so impressed that my granddaughter told the Mongolian officers that she would like to join the camp. She made a nice Mongolian dress for herself and won the hearts of everybody. Chairman Batmunkh said, "We have a Mongolian girl in your family."

On July 14, we visited a knitting factory and a thermal power plant established by the Soviet Union. Compared to similar units in India, these looked primitive. Mongolia has a long way to go to catch up with modern sophisticated industries. We also went to Gandang Tekcholing monastery, the only functioning monastery in Mongolia. All others had been closed after the revolution. It was explained to us that the Lamas were both spiritual and temporal heads and since the temporal power had to be eliminated under the Communist regime, the spiritual authority also went with it and that it was not out of bias against Buddhism that the monasteries were closed. We were also informed that Buddhism came to Mongolia from India via Tibet and that all the scriptures kept in the monastery were in Sanskrit, Tibetan and in the Mongolian language. Lamas were functioning there and new Lamas were being recruited but very few people came to the monastery.

In the afternoon there was a reception by the Trade Unions where Chairman Batmunkh and I spoke. It was in the nature of a public reception. This was followed by a cultural

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

show in which the participants gave a thrilling demonstration of gymnastics. Later, we saw some old monasteries which had been turned into museums. There were a number of *stupas, dharma chakras* and lion images as in India. The sacred texts were all wrapped in silk and preserved. There were also a large number of images of the Buddha, each with different facial expression and features.

We had lunch in the Farm Guest House. In the afternoon we saw a wrestling match with Mongolian music in the background. We were offered the favourite Mongolian drink, mare's milk, which I could not stomach. There was a cross-country horse race for boys below 10 over a 30 kilometre course. Since Mongolia had no modern means of transport, everyone used horses for their movement and everyone had to be trained in horse riding.

On July 16, there was a ceremonial farewell and Chairman Batmunkh gave an affectionate send-off. I repeated my invitation to him to visit India which pleased him immensely. We returned to Delhi via Tashkent at 6 p.m. local time.

On my return to Delhi I found that a controversy over my incorporating Rajiv Gandhi's message in my speech to the closing ceremony of the Festival of India was still raging. Some newspapers had written that the President had committed a grave breach of protocol by reading a message from the Prime Minister who was only number three in order of precedence. Sanjiva Reddy, the former President, bemoaned my lapse. Atal Behari Vajpayee, BJP leader and former Minister for External Affairs, wrote to me that my reading the Prime Minister's message at the closing ceremony was a slur on "my otherwise successful tour"

Protocol is observance of official formality and etiquette. It appeared to me that reciprocity and etiquette required

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

matching the message from chairman of the Soviet Festival Committee Gorbachev, with the message from the Indian co-chairman Rajiv Gandhi, and the omission to do so would be a case of breach of etiquette. Earlier I had received Rajiv Gandhi on his return from Sri Lanka after the dastardly attack on him by one of the men of the guard of honour. I had also stepped down from the dais and walked up to the ailing Raj Kapoor to present him the Phalke Award. These were instances of courtesy overriding convention. I thought it was just reciprocal courtesy to the foreign dignitary to match message for message. I however wrote to Vajpayee explaining my view. The reputed columnist Prem Bhatia, who always displays courage to refute petty jingoism, wrote:

"Such needless fuss has been made in recent days about the incident in Moscow involving President Venkataraman, described by journalists and opposition leaders alike as a *faux pas* committed by the visiting head of state. Editorial writers, columnists and political leaders alike have projected the incident as if it was a crime committed by the First Citizen. This is a lot of nonsense. It was an act of graciousness rather than of subservience."

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

13

Nagaland had been facing unstable political conditions for some years. Defections and splits had wrecked the Ministries all too frequently and tribal politics had been playing havoc with the democratic system. The State had a Congress Ministry headed by Hokishe Sema with 34 members out of a total of 60 of the Legislative Assembly. Around July 30, 13 MLAs of the Congress Party quit the Congress and formed a separate party, thereby reducing the strength of Hokishe Sema to 21. The opposition leader Vamuzo staked his claim to form a government with the help of the new group of 13 MLAs. Governor K.V. Krishna Rao, who was holding charge as Manipur Governor as well, was on camp at Imphal. Leaders of opposition parties in Parliament called on me on August 5 and asked for the dismissal of the Hokishe Sema Ministry and for Vamuzo to form the government in Nagaland. I told them that I was awaiting the Governor's report on the situation. Meanwhile frantic efforts were being made by central Congress leaders to win back some of the rebels. Finally the Governor sent a report stating that due to political uncertainty in the State, a stable government could not be carried on in accordance with the Constitution. President's Rule was clamped and the Assembly dissolved.

I decided that my Republic Day and Independence Day addresses should carry a message to the nation on some vital matters of concern along with the customary references to the events of the day. I chose for the theme free and fair

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

elections, since general elections to Parliament were due next year. Speaking on the eve of Independence Day I said: "The Indian voter has indeed become conscious of his political rights and though he may be unlettered and wearing the humblest of clothes, he is using the electoral process skilfully for democratic self-expression." I emphasised the responsibility of political parties for ensuring free and fair elections. I appealed to all political parties and groups as well as administrators and police in charge of elections to regard themselves as trustees of the voter's sovereignty and to act with integrity and impartiality.

The media considered the message fair and timely. Nikhil Chakravartty, the highly respected columnist, commented favourably on my emphasis on free and fair elections and my appeal to the ruling as well as opposition parties to preserve the best traditions of democratic elections. He also criticised Doordarshan for placing my message as the fourth item in the news bulletin in violation of the convention of placing the message of the Head of State as the first item. For my part I did not attach any significance to the priority given or not given. However the Minister for Information, H.K.L. Bhagat, called on me and expressed regret for the lapse on the part of Doordarshan.

On August 20, 1988, President Zia-ul-Haq was given a memorable state funeral. A strong multi-party delegation to the funeral from India was led by me and consisted of Foreign Minister Narasimha Rao, Environment Minister Z.R. Ansari, Minister of State Natwar Singh and members of Parliament Atal Behari Vajpayee, N.K.P. Salve, Prof. Dandavate, Madhav Reddi and Darbara Singh. The funeral was attended by as many as 70 world leaders including the Presidents of Turkey, Bangladesh, Zimbabwe, the Secretary of State of the United States and the British Foreign Secretary. Several lakhs of people lined up the route of the funeral

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

procession and many wept openly.

It was the first ever visit of the President of India to Pakistan. The acting President, Ishaq Khan, and the Foreign Minister, Yakub Khan, and other officials received me at the airport. I immediately conveyed India's sorrow at the demise of President Zia and informed them of our ordering a three-day mourning in India and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's cancellation of his birthday reception as part of the state mourning. Ishaq Khan thanked India for its gesture and sympathy.

The funeral was followed by a meeting with Ishaq Khan, "the longest Mr. Khan had with the visiting foreign dignitaries" according to *The Telegraph* of Calcutta. At the meeting I assured the acting President that India desired to live in peace and amity with Pakistan and that "a weak and unstable Pakistan was not in India's interest". Ishaq Khan replied that he deeply appreciated my presence and sympathy in the hour of sorrow. I also met Geoffrey Howe, the British Foreign Secretary, whom I had known closely from the time when we were Finance Ministers of our countries and worked together in the drafting sessions of the IMF–World Bank meetings. We discussed India's relations with the countries in the region and our genuine desire to build harmonious relations with our neighbours. The meeting lasted 40 minutes and was held at our ambassador S.K. Singh's residence.

On August 27 I formally opened the Advanced Missile Technology Centre at Hyderabad. During my tenure as Defence Minister I had initiated indigenous development of guided missiles and was happy to hear that "Trishul" and "Prithvi", two surface-to-air guided missiles, would become operational by 1990. Complimenting the Defence Research and Development Organisation on its efforts to achieve self-sufficiency in defence hardware, I urged them to achieve the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

state-of-the-art in weaponry and called for close collaboration between scientific institutions and defence to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort and facilities.

The Madras High Court had completed 125 years of its existence. Established in 1862 by letters patent, the High Court of Judicature at Madras has witnessed a galaxy of illustrious judges and lawyers pass through its portals each generation. Starting with the legendary Sir T. Muthuswami Iyer, the High Court bench has been adorned by stalwarts like S. Subramania Iyer, Kumaraswami Sastri, Venkata Subba Rao, Vepa Ramesam, S. Varadachariar, Rajamannar, T. L. Venkatarama Iyer, Patanjali Sastri and Subba Rao, the last two reaching the pinnacle as Chief Justices of India. I felt proud to inaugurate the celebrations. The Chief Justice of India, R. S. Pathak, Attorney-General Parasaran, Governor Alexander, Union Law Minister Shankaranand and officiating Chief Justice of Madras High Court Ratnavel Pandian were among other participants. Inaugurating the function on August 30, I said: "Mounting arrears in courts threaten to damage the image of the judiciary and destroy confidence in the judicial process." I called for expeditious trials and asked Bar Associations to scrutinise the bills and offer constructive criticism for improvement of the legislation. As the concept of social justice was changing with the times, I emphasised the necessity for the judiciary to keep pace with social changes. I concluded by appealing to the people to observe the laws voluntarily and thereby sustain the democratic ethos.

The next day I unveiled a statue of the veteran freedom fighter and a model legislator, the late S. Sathyamurti, at Vellore. Sathyamurti was a powerful speaker in English and Tamil and used to keep the British administration on tenter-hooks while he addressed the Central Assembly. He would often trap the government during question hour and

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

confront it with either its own earlier statements or its administration reports. I had the privilege of campaigning for Sathyamurti during his historic contest with the stalwart of the Justice Party, A. Ramaswami Mualiar, in 1934 and had been in close touch with him till his demise. Sathyamurti used to prepare his supplementaries to questions meticulously, gather materials from the mass of documents and papers supplied to legislators and pack his speeches with unassailable facts and figures. So much so that Gandhiji once said, "If we have 10 persons like Sathyamurti in Parliament, the British Government will fall without struggle."

Thereafter I visited the Central Jail, Vellore, where I had been a detainee during the Quit India movement. Unfortunately the records relating to my detention could not be traced by the jail authorities. However, Jeevaratnam, M.P., who was my co-prisoner, identified the cell I lived in. I planted a sapling and unveiled a plaque in memory of my visit. At the request of some freedom fighters who had gathered there, I donned the Gandhi cap and *Angavastram* and posed for photographs. Little did I dream during my days in jail that I would revisit it as the First Citizen of the country.

Thirteen Congress MLAs from the Rayalaseema area of Andhra Pradesh went on hunger-strike, demanding 370 TMC (Thousand Million Cubic ft.) of water for their drought-prone area. The Chief Minister, N.T. Rama Rao, tried to pacify them stating that he would endeavour to meet the aspirations of the people and appealed to the agitating MLAs to withdraw the hunger-strike. But the MLAs persisted in their protest. The Chief Minister cleverly turned the tables on the Central Government, saying that 22 irrigation projects of Andhra Pradesh had not been cleared by the Centre and arranged for hundreds of legislators including State ministers to agitate at the Boat Club in Delhi. There was a big

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

rally at the Boat Club on August 31. According to party leaders, a request for appointment with the Prime Minister was made four days prior to that, but no reply had been received. Hence the protesters decided to march to the residence of the Prime Minister on September 1. As soon as they reached the first barricade to the Prime Minister's residence, they were stopped by the police. The processionists tried to force entry and a melee ensued. The police then used tear gas and *lathis* and several people were injured. Finally they were taken to the police station and kept in custody.

The opposition leaders sought an interview with me and I allotted them time on September 1 at 5 p.m. The processionists were released and were able to keep their appointment with me. Their leader, Upendra, M.P., bitterly attacked the Prime Minister for not receiving the delegation. Thus the main issue of sanction of projects receded to the background and the unpleasant episode gained attention.

At the next fortnightly meeting on September 3, the Prime Minister explained to me that he was prepared to meet a small delegation but was not sure if it had been communicated to the protesters. Apparently there was some lapse in the Prime Minister's office which led to such an unseemly situation. Very often small mistakes in offices lead to serious situations for the country.

On September 1, 1988, the Government adopted the Defamation Bill in the Lok Sabha in the face of violent opposition. The Bill sought to shift the burden of proof on the defendant and enhance punishment for making unfounded charges of criminal offence against a person. It is true that some less responsible newspapers had indulged in reckless allegations of misconduct, criminal offences and immorality, without verification, damaging the reputation of persons in public life. People remember the accusation but not the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

exoneration which in any event comes much later. Besides, unscrupulous persons have used slander as an instrument of blackmail. Some kind of restraint was certainly called for but legislation was indeed the very last measure.

On September 3, the Prime Minister asked Buta Singh, Shiv Shankar, Fotedar and the Attorney-General to explain to me the details of the Bill. I opined that some spadework by way of consultation with the opposition, the Press and eminent people should have preceded the introduction of a measure which was obviously controversial. They were quick to notice my reservation.

The Bill was fiercely opposed by the Press, members of the Bar and the public. The Press called for a one-day protest strike, confronted ministers in public meetings, refused to report proceedings of committees and mounted a severe attack on the Government. Some members of the ruling party also began to waver and became lukewarm in their support for the measure.

Some of the Ministers who had met me earlier, again called on me on Sunday, September 4, the day before the Bill was scheduled for discussion in the Rajya Sabha. I advised them not to push the Bill through but to start a dialogue with the Press and others interested in the issue. The Prime Minister decided not to proceed with the Bill but at the same time announced that he was constituting a ministerial committee to hear the views of the Press and the public and sought their cooperation with the work of the committee. By this time, the opposition to the Bill had gathered unprecedented momentum and the Press decided to boycott the ministerial committee. N. Ram of *The Hindu* called on me on September 6. I told him that since the Government responded to public opinion and deferred consideration of the Bill by the Rajya Sabha, the Press could consider placing its views before the ministerial committee and open the door

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

for democratic discussion. However, Ram replied that the I.E.N.S. had already taken a decision to boycott the ministerial committee.

Later, while I was on tour, I came to know that the Prime Minister was not proceeding with the Bill as he wanted a nationwide dialogue on the rights of the individual as against the freedom of the Press. This was an unhappy episode. Rajiv Gandhi's experience with Parliament and its reactions was rather limited. His close associates were also novices in Parliament. They could not judge public reactions properly. Had he consulted me before introducing the measure, as he did afterwards, he might have spared himself all the odium he had to endure. It is a pity that Rajiv, who had not the faintest desire to hurt the Press and who enjoyed meeting it, suddenly acquired the reputation of an enemy of the Press and of freedom of expression. Experience is a much greater guide than knowledge and wisdom, more so when one is dealing with fellow-men on social issues.

To mark the centenary of the great philosopher-statesman, Dr Radhakrishnan, a colourful function was organised in the Central Hall of Parliament at 9. 30 a.m. on September 5. A portrait of Dr Radhakrishnan was also unveiled on the occasion. I had a close association with Dr Radhakrishnan and used to be his Minister-in-Waiting whenever he visited Madras as Vice-President and later as President. During the years 1952-57 when I was in Parliament, I used to meet him frequently and talk about the U.N. sessions and all that happened there. Once Nehru suddenly turned up to meet Dr Radhakrishnan and found me there. He asked me, "What are you doing here?" Dr Radhakrishnan jocularly told Panditji, "He briefs me on U.N. sessions even before you do."

Speaking on the occasion, I described Dr Radhakrishnan as a statesman among philosophers and a philosopher

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

among statesmen. During his ten years as Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, noisy scenes and walk-outs were virtually unknown, latitude was given but no laxity allowed, humour was encouraged but flippancy shut out, arguments were welcomed but abuse was sternly put down. It was during his period that the Rajya Sabha reached the highest watermark in dignity and decorum. I also referred to the unique combination of a Gandhian, Dr Rajendra Prasad as President, a scholar Dr Radhakrishnan as Vice-President, and a true democrat Jawaharlal Nehru as Prime Minister. I recalled how from humble beginnings Dr Radhakrishnan had grown into an international philosopher transcending all territorial boundaries and how he was welcomed everywhere as a sage and a statesman, a modern-day equivalent of Plato's ideal of a philosopher-king. In the afternoon I participated in the annual Teacher's Day function and gave national awards to distinguished teachers numbering about 160.

The contagion of floor-crossing spread from Nagaland to Mizoram. In the general elections to Mizoram Assembly in 1987, Laldenga, the one-time rebel leader, secured 24 seats out of 40 and formed the government on February 16, 1987. On August 24, 1988, nine members of the party withdrew support from Laldenga's Government and formed a separate party, thus reducing Laldenga's strength in the House to a minority. The usual wrangle about whether it was a 'split' or 'defection' under the anti-defection law ensued and the Speaker issued notices to the dissidents. The Congress Party leader staked his claim to form the Ministry with the help of those who had formed a separate group. Hitendra Saikia, former Chief Minister of Assam and currently Governor of Mizoram, sent a report that with the fluid loyalties of MLAs of Mizoram a stable government could not be formed and accordingly recommended proclamation of President's Rule

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

in Mizoram.

I had no hesitation in accepting the Government's recommendation for imposing President's Rule and dissolving the Assembly. In any event the decision to impose President's Rule is that of the Union Cabinet and it is answerable to Parliament.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

14

After consulting me, the External Affairs Ministry arranged my tour of the Netherlands, Finland, Cyprus and Czecho-slovakia from September 12 to 23. On September 12, I embarked on my tour after a ceremonial send-off by the Vice-President, Prime Minister and the elite of Delhi. The official team consisted of Ram Nivas Mirdha, Minister in Waiting, Prem Kumar, Secretary to the President, Alfred Gonsalves, Secretary, External Affairs Ministry, and other officials.

The flight from Delhi to Amsterdam took nine hours but owing to time difference we reached around 3 p.m. local time. As we approached the city, six F-16 fighter aircraft of the Dutch Royal Air Force escorted our plane to our destination. At the Schiphol airport, the Queen's sister, Princess Margaret and her husband greeted us. We flew by helicopter to the naval base where Queen Beatrix and Prince Claus offered a ceremonial reception. This was the first visit of a Head of State from India to the Netherlands and the Queen expressed great pleasure at my visit. Prince Claus had been to India several times and had met me when I was the Minister for Finance. When during that visit our talks turned to bureaucratic red tape, I showed him a file pad with white tape and said that it reflected the government's new attitude. Prince Claus was so impressed that he repeated this

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

visible transformation in many of his subsequent discussions.

We were housed in the Royal Palace which was in the centre of the city. It is a beautiful palace with stately halls, majestic pillars, elegant and antique furniture and modern fittings. The way Europe has maintained its old palaces compels admiration. From my window I could see the main shopping centre and a small square (Dam Square) where, like the Boat Club in Delhi, occasional demonstrations were held. The national monument was just opposite the palace and so the ceremony of wreath laying hardly took a few minutes.

The Burgomaster (mayor) of Amsterdam held a reception for our delegation. He welcomed us in a short speech in which he said that Prime Minister Nehru had presented the city zoo an elephant which was happily growing. I thanked the mayor for his warm words of welcome and spoke about the old Dutch settlements in India. I then presented him a beautifully carved rosewood elephant with an ivory inlaid *howdah* (seat) and said that I was following the footsteps of Nehru coincidentally. The piece was admired by the entire audience.

After a brief ceremony of exchange of gifts between the Queen and myself, we adjourned for the state banquet which they call 'Gala Dinner'. I told the Queen that 'gala', in Indian usage of English, means grand or hilarious and wondered what it signified in Dutch. Her Majesty was not able to explain the term but said that it had been traditionally called 'Gala Dinner' and the name had been in vogue for a long time. Proposing the toast, the Queen referred generously to India's ancient heritage, its importance in the modern world and its democratic structure. She also expressed the keen desire of the Netherlands to help developing countries like India in their endeavour to improve the lot of the masses.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Replying to the toast I complimented the Netherlands on its progressive policies, more particularly its interest in the North-South dialogue and hoped that despite the set-back that it had recently received, the Netherlands would continue to exert its influence for a fruitful North-South debate. I referred to the relaxation of tension between the Soviet Union and the Western countries and hoped that positive steps would be pursued towards nuclear and general disarmament. Dealing with our policies, I explained our desire to live in peace and harmony with all our neighbours and to normalise our relations with China. I, however pointed out that Pakistan's support to terrorists in Punjab and Kashmir and its clandestine nuclear arms policy came in the way of any reasonable understanding with that country. I recalled that in India there were as many as 200 collaborations with Dutch companies in areas of telecommunications, environment and culture. I expressed the hope that Indo-Dutch relations would further expand and strengthen in the future.

During dinner, the Queen asked me why India was refusing to sign the N.P.T. and whether it was because of the nuclear programme of Pakistan and the nuclear power of China on our border. I explained to Her Majesty that our objection stemmed from the discriminatory nature of the Treaty. While N.P.T. allowed expansion, growth and development of nuclear devices by nuclear powers without any restriction, it sought to control and restrain the non-nuclear states. It was illogical to permit vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons by the members of the Nuclear Club and prevent horizontal proliferation by the have-nots. I said N.P.T. will gain credibility with the developing countries if the nuclear powers accepted an immediate test ban and a time-bound programme for the elimination of nuclear weapons. I pointed out that though India had the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

technological capability to go nuclear, it had voluntarily desisted from making nuclear weapons because India has always believed in a nuclear weapon free and non-violent world. In that sense, India was a greater champion of nuclear non-proliferation than those who preached non-proli feration to others and continued expanding and testing nuclear weapons themselves. The Queen heard me without interrupting and remained silent for a while after I finished. I thought she was collecting her ideas to counter what I had said. But the Queen saw the Indian viewpoint on N.P.T.

On September 13, we visited the Rijks Museum and saw the masterpieces of Rembrandt and renowned Dutch artists of the seventeenth century. The extraordinary care bestowed on these historic objects and the efforts to preserve them for posterity impressed me very much. We saw marvellous furniture, silver and porcelain, aesthetically arranged and attractively displayed. I was told that a million people visit the museum annually. We also saw the Royal Tropical Institute which is engaged in studies on rural development, tropical hygiene and education in developing countries. Thereafter I met Dutch Professors engaged in Indian studies and had useful discussions with them.

The Dutch Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers hosted a lunch for our delegation in the historic Hall of Knights in The Hague which is the seat of the government. Her Majesty the Queen and her consort Prince Claus attended it. In India the President does not attend parties hosted by the Prime Minister. Our protocol is 'superior' to the Dutch. The Prime Minister had a sore throat and his welcome speech was read by the Deputy Prime Minister. He said that joint ventures in India could be expanded if the two nations adopted a practical approach and solved the problems expeditiously. He pointed out that the recent Indo-Netherlands Agreement on avoidance of double taxation would provide additional

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

incentive to Dutch enterprises to invest in India. Asserting that the Netherlands firmly believed in free trade without restrictions, the Prime Minister assured us that the Single Market (1992) envisaged by the European Community would increase trade opportunities for India, rather than restrict it. He continued that "although India was not a member of the European Economic Community a large portion of Indian exports entered the Community market free of duty". He added that as a founding member of the European Community, the Netherlands had a major stake in economic cooperation with India.

Replying to the address, I explained our policy of progressive liberalization of the economy and the scope for larger investment in India by the Netherlands. I said "In our present phase of industrialisation, where the accent is on modernisation and efficiency, there is considerable scope for diversifying economic exchanges." I referred to the rather modest Dutch equity investment in India and called for larger participation in Indian ventures. Even in trade between the two countries, I pointed out India's export to Holland amounted to barely Rs 22 crores while import exceeded Rs 540 crores in 1987. I concluded by acknowledging Dutch assistance in the modernisation of Indian ports, inland waterways, ship-building and ship repair. After lunch we were taken to one of the royal palaces, Noordeinde, which was more luxurious than the Amsterdam Palace.

In the evening our ambassador in the Netherlands hosted a reception and invited over 150 Indian residents. I spoke to them about the friendly relations between India and Holland and of the vast opportunities for industrial development in India. I appealed to the people of Indian origin in Holland to start their ventures in India and become partners in the country's progress.

At night the Queen and her family had a quiet family

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

dinner with us. We chatted informally on several matters. Prince Claus who had been to India several times and who knew many things about India was very understanding. He observed that while he read a great deal about India's so-called religious clashes, social oppression etc., he had found life inside India to be normal, and economic and social activities going on without much interruption. He was optimistic about India's economic growth and development.

After dinner there was an Indian music recital by Shiv Kumar Sharma on the santoor and a Hindustani vocal recital by Kasinath Bodas, both of whom happened to be in Amsterdam in connection with ICCR programmes. Kasinath is also the music master of my daughter Vijaya Ramachandran who joined in the recital. The Queen repeatedly expressed her appreciation of this programme and said we had sprung a surprise by providing delightful Indian music.

The Press gave good coverage to my visit. *The Telegraph* which has a circulation of over a million published a large picture of my inspecting the guard of honour with the Queen at the Naval Base and also headlined the Queen's statement "India, an example for Europe".

On September 14 there was a ceremonial farewell, the Queen expressing once again her deep appreciation of my visit. I thanked Her Majesty for the warm welcome and generous hospitality showered on our delegation. Before leaving, we took off in a helicopter to visit a windmill farm. This farm is an experimental station with six rows of four windmills each. These were neither cost effective nor have substantial output. The Station Director expressed the hope that they might achieve a breakthrough with further studies and research. I told them of our experimenting with windmills in India and our desire to exchange information on the problems and the progress of these devices. We then flew

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

over the famous dyke separating the North Sea from the sweet water lake — a magnificent achievement of man. During my earlier visit 25 years ago, I had driven across the whole length of the dyke and taken many transparencies and pictures. After reaching Amsterdam airport and after a warm and affectionate farewell from Prince Claus we took off for Finland at 1 p.m.

We arrived at Helsinki, the world's northernmost capital around 4 p.m. local time, which is an hour in advance of Amsterdam. There was no ceremonial reception at the Vantaa airport. We drove to the Presidential Palace where we were received by President and Madame Koivisto. There was a simple ceremony of presentation of guard of honour and a brief introduction.

Shortly after arrival we paid homage at the tomb of martyrs who had laid down their lives for the country's freedom and at the tomb of Marshal Mannerhem, their national hero. The ceremony was very simple and informal. Contrary to the usual rigour of state visits to other countries, the visit to Finland was relaxed and quiet. President Koivisto himself set the pace with his pleasing informality.

There was a state banquet on the night of September 14. President Koivisto, proposing the toast, welcomed the easing of tensions between the East and the West and the INF treaty between Soviet Union and United States. He hoped that further progress in reduction of nuclear armaments would follow. He also appreciated perestroika and liberalisation of the economy in the Soviet Union and was confident that the process would gather strength and momentum. Referring to bilateral relations with India, President Koivisto expressed satisfaction at the progress so far achieved and called for efforts on both sides to improve it. The democratic and secular aspects of Indian polity received his special appreciation. In his view India had a role

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

to play in maintaining peace and stability in South Asia.

Replying to the welcome I recalled his visit to India with Madame Koivisto in February 1987 and the fillip it gave to greater mutual cooperation. I detailed the progress India had made since Independence, particularly in food self-sufficiency, industrial development and diversification and expansion of skilled manpower. "Ours is a democratic society and the solutions to these problems had to be found within democratic parameters," I added. Surveying the world scene, I welcomed the termination of the fratricidal war between Iran and Iraq and the Geneva Agreement on Afghanistan. I complimented President Koivisto on his contribution to the promotion of North–South dialogue and East–West détente. Expressing our happiness over the I.N.F. treaty, I recalled the timebound action plan presented by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi at the special session of the U.N. Referring to the cultural history I recalled that Wallenius, the Finnish scholar, had started teaching Sanskrit in the University of Helsinki as early as 1835 and that Kalidasa's *Sakuntalam* was staged last year in Kaupio. Likewise, I said the Finnish national epic *Kalavela* had been translated into Hindi.

Talking informally during the banquet, President Koivisto expressed appreciation of Rajiv Gandhi for his increasing role in global affairs and for his sober handling of India's internal problems. Madame Koivisto was all admiration for everything Indian, the silks, metalware, embroidery, handicrafts and monuments. The Koivistos are genuine, friendly and gentle people and were not indulging in the usual diplomatic jargon.

On September 15, official talks between the President and his team and our delegation started in a cordial atmosphere and lasted over an hour. Noting the serious adverse balance of trade India had with Finland, it was

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

decided to take concrete steps to correct the trade imbalance. Both sides felt there was considerable scope for increasing their economic and technical co-operation. The Finnish President also offered to transfer 'high tech' to India in certain areas. The visit of the delegation from the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry and the proposed visit of another delegation from the Indian Merchants Chamber were regarded as welcome steps towards expansion of economic relations between the two countries. The Finnish President was optimistic that the expanded single market of the European Community would offer wider opportunities to developing countries to expand their trade with the Community and allayed India's apprehensions on this. Both of us agreed that the developing countries were suffering under the crushing debt burden and that the North–South dialogue should give its urgent attention to this problem. We reiterated our commitment to the elimination of nuclear weapons and for general and complete disarmament. As regards China, I said that India was keen on normalisation of relations with the neighbour and expressed the hope that the visit of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi to China later in the year would help the process.

After the talks we flew to the arctic city Rovaniemi in Lapland accompanied by President and Madame Koivisto. It was indeed a nice gesture on the part of the Finnish President and his wife to accompany us. In India the President does not go with the visiting dignitaries to any of the places of interest they visit.

At the lunch hosted by the Governor of Lapland, in which the Finnish President also participated (a blasphemy according to Indian protocol), I went into raptures over the beautiful country. We visited the reindeer farm and saw those lovely animals used for pulling sledges which are their transport vehicles during winter, when the temperature

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

goes down to minus 90° celsius. Nowadays diesel engine sledges are used more and more. We were given a reindeer milkpot as souvenir.

Rovaniemi, the provincial capital of Lapland, is famous throughout the world as the place where the legendary Father Christmas has established his own post office. Santa Claus receives about 300,000 letters from children all over the world and replies to each one of them. I was the first Indian President to visit the Santa Claus village. Santa, as a special gesture, came to the door of the workshop and received me and showed us the articles of gifts made by the local Lapps. After spending an exhilarating hour with the Santa group we took leave of them reluctantly and returned to Helsinki the same evening.

As per our programme we met the Speaker and the party leaders of the Finnish Parliament and witnessed the House in session. It was a sedate House, resembling the afternoon session of our Parliament with few members and desultory speeches. The Speaker told me that there were very few noisy scenes in the House.

The Finnish Government had arranged a meeting with the heads of missions located in Helsinki. After meeting them individually, I mingled and chatted freely with them. I could see a genuine interest among them in India. To some India was a mystery. They read about the poverty, religious turmoil, terrorist activities in the newspapers and yet found an orderly government functioning, effectively making striking advances in industry, science and technology, space sciences and Antartica expeditions. I spent an enjoyable hour with them clarifying and replying to their genuine doubts.

The city of Helsinki hosted a lunch for us on September 16. The Chairman of the City Council, in his welcome speech, spoke of the friendly interest that people of his country had

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

in India, its ancient traditions and culture. In reply I complimented the Chairman of the City Council on preserving the ecology and environment despite phenomenal rise in industrial ventures. I recalled that it was Helsinki that set in motion the crucial talks on strategic arms limitation between the Soviet Union and the United States and dealt on the necessity of reconciling science with humanism and harnessing scientific and technological development for the welfare of mankind.

In the afternoon I addressed the Paasikivi Society, a prestigious institution of intellectuals, founded thirty years ago. The Society consists of former diplomats, former cabinet ministers, educationists and social scientists of repute. Those who had addressed the Society on earlier occasions included eminent statesmen and distinguished authors and writers of the world. I was flattered when I was invited to address this Society.

The theme of my talk was 'India's Achievements and Challenges'. Delivering the speech at the Society, I paid tributes to the former President of Finland, Juhokrist Paasikivi, the sagacious statesman and a great patriot who had left a deep and abiding imprint on Finland's domestic and foreign policy of democracy and neutrality. I made the following points during my forty minutes' talk to the elite audience:

"India's struggle for freedom was unique and different from the armed rebellions known to history. Non-violence was a creed and not a strategy adopted by Mahatma Gandhi and the nation.

"India is a pluralistic society with many languages, religious castes and creeds and also a land of great contrasts. The founding fathers of our Constitution fully understood that such diverse population could be welded together only through democratic self-expres-

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

sion and freedom of thought and worship. India was a mature democracy having held eight general elections on adult franchise and established the rule of law.

"India's progress in agriculture, industry, science and technology since Independence had been spectacular and was poised for a take off on its own strength and momentum."

After the talk some questions were asked about our measures to control population and on the status of women. I said that India, as a democratic country, could adopt only voluntary methods for checking population growth. As regards the second issue I said India had produced an eminent woman Prime Minister, several women scientists, writers and artists but at the same time there was a regrettable measure of illiteracy and social disabilities among them.

On September 17, there was a brief meeting with President Koivisto and a ceremonial farewell at the Presidential Palace.

The utter informality and absence of rigorous protocol in Finland impressed me very deeply. Compared to the liveried staff, mounted bodyguards and clatter of employees moving hither and thither in purposeless activity at Rashtrapati Bhavan, the dinner, the discussions and sight-seeing hours in Finland were all quiet, simple and dignified.

The island of Cyprus in the Mediterranean Sea has a long and ancient history. It dates back to centuries before Christ. It had been under the occupation of the Roman, the Greek and the Turkish empires and finally under the British as its colony. The people of Cyprus had carried on a struggle for freedom and their national leader Archbishop Makarios was an admirer and follower of Mahatma Gandhi. Archbishop Makarios had visited Madras in 1962 as President of Cyprus

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

and as Minister-in-Waiting for him, I had taken him to the Mahabalipuram rock temples and the school of sculpture. I had earlier visited Cyprus as a tourist and seen much of its scenic beauty and places of interest. It was indeed a great pleasure for me to revisit the country.

Our delegation arrived at Larnaca international airport at 3 p.m. local time. The President of Cyprus, George Vassiliou, received us at the airport. There was a short ceremony in which President Vassiliou made a welcome speech and I replied thanking him for his welcome and expressing the hope that our ties would be further strengthened by the visit. The drive from the airport to Nicosia, the capital, was a long one and so we talked about the Commonwealth and its effectiveness in solving issues like apartheid, the NAM and its role in the changing world of détente, the domestic problems of Cyprus, especially the Turkish occupation of certain areas, and our own inter-vention in Sri Lanka.

In Nicosia we stayed in a luxurious suite in Hilton International Hotel. President Vassiliou told me that Hilton Hotel was started as a private enterprise with large public subscription. When it ran into loss, the people clamoured that they had been misled into the investment. The government therefore purchased all shares at their face value even though the market quotation was less. Now the hotel was making a profit and the people were agitating that the shares should be returned to them and the hotel privatised again.

The Indian High Commissioner called on me and briefed me about the situation in Cyprus. He informed me that Turkish troops had occupied the western part of the island and a part of the city of Nicosia. The cease-fire was effective and there were very few incidents between the two armies. The former President of Cyprus, Kyprianou had refused to talk to the other side unless the Turkish troops were withdrawn from Cyprus. But the new President Vassiliou

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

withdrawn from Cyprus. But the new President Vassiliou had offered to form a federal government for Cyprus, with the status of a province for the area under Turkish occupation. Only a week prior to my visit, negoiations between the two parties had started under U.N. auspices. Our High Commissioner said the stalemate had been broken and the offer of talks was itself a welcome step.

The same evening we proceeded to the Presidential Palace for official talks. On our way we laid a wreath at the statue of Archbishop Makarios, the founder of independent Cyprus.

The talks between President Vassiliou and his team and our delegation were very cordial. Cyprus was grateful to India for its support to the unity and territorial integrity of the island. President Vassiliou was a little apprehensive of the possible change of our attitude after Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's visit to Turkey earlier that year. I assured the President that India discouraged rebellious groups which fomented fissiparous activities and gave the instance of Sri Lanka, where India had refused to support the claim of the ethnic Tamils for a separate state of Eelam. President Vassiliou commended the Indian action of sending troops to Sri Lanka to preserve the national unity and integrity, unlike Turkey which had sent troops to divide Cyprus. President Vassiliou explained that by setting up joint ventures in Cyprus, India would be able to gain entry in the European Common Market. I responded favourably and pointed out that India had developed expertise in several areas which could be attractive to Cyprus for promoting joint ventures. On issues like INF treaty, ban of nuclear weapons and North–South dialogue, there was complete unanimity of views and the entire talks were friendly and cooperative.

The state banquet was arranged in the Hilton Hotel as the Presidential Palace could not accommodate the large

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

number of guests. President and Madame Vassiliou called on us ten minutes earlier and chatted with me and my wife.

Proposing the toast, President Vassiliou referred to the strong bonds of friendship between Cyprus and India and to the freedom struggle in which both the countries had been engaged. He referred to the inspiration that Archbishop Makarios drew from Mahatma Gandhi and to the cultural affinity between the two countries. He expatiated on the scope for greater economic cooperation between the two countries and for more and more joint ventures.

In reply I recalled that both our countries had an ancient history dating back to thousands of years before Christ and that both had seen the confluence of several races flowing into our respective countries during our long history. Supporting Cyprus in its conflict with Turkey I said that a "united, sovereign and non-aligned Cyprus would contribute to peace and stability in the region". There was much clatter and chatter reflecting the high spirits of the guests and both delegations.

The next day, September 18, was largely devoted to sight seeing. The Foreign Minister Iacovou and his wife escorted us. We made a short tour of the city and saw the barricades separating the Turkish area of the city. It was pathetic to see the beautiful city of Nicosia split asunder. I had visited Nicosia in the early seventies and had roamed about the city. I saw Hotel Cleopatra, where I had stayed earlier, with nostalgic memories. Gone were the days when I used to visit Europe and America every year as President of United Nation's Administrative Tribunal.

Cyprus is rich with historic relics and monuments. It came under Byzantine, Greek, Roman, Turkish and British occupation during its long and hoary history. Many of them had left landmarks of their regimes. For instance in Kourion, a Roman theatre built in perfect symmetry has been

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

excavated by archaeologists. We proceeded to the ancient city of Paphos. Tombs of the old kings of Cyprus belonging to the millenium before Christ have been built with perfect precision exhibiting extraordinary engineering skills. Their place was paved with mosaic patterns that are a marvel even today. These monuments are situated on British territory. As part of the independence agreement with Cyprus, the British retained an air force base with sovereignty over that territory. They allowed free access to the area but denied settlements and purchase of property in its territory. In effect in Cyprus today, there are three independent areas viz., the British area, the Turkish-occupied area and the Cypriot Government area.

After lunch in Hotel Annabelle in the Cypriot territory we returned via the lovely coast of Cyprus. We stopped at the legendary birthplace of Aphrodite, the Greek Goddess of love and beauty, and marvelled at the enchanting scenery of the sea and the rocks. I told the Cypriot guide that the place was so beautiful that if Aphrodite was ever born she could not have chosen a better place.

On September 19, I paid floral tributes to the statue of Mahatma Gandhi erected by the Cyprus Government in homage to the memory of the great leader of India's freedom struggle and the apostle of non-violence. The late President Archbishop Makarios used to pride himself that he followed Gandhiji's footsteps in the Cypriot struggle for Independence. Thereafter we visited the Byzantine Museum and the Cyprus Archaeological Museum which contained a wealth of information on the history and culture of ancient Cyprus. I felt sad that such a country with a glorious past should be torn asunder by warring forces.

In the afternoon I addressed the House of Representatives of the Republic of Cyprus and made the following points:

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

"The pluralist tradition of both Cyprus and India and the assimilation of various cultures helped our people to develop resilience and capacity to face the challenges.

"India deplored the tragic division of Cyprus and supported steadfastly Cypriotic efforts to preserve its independence, territorial integrity and non-aligned status.

"India was gratified that the Government of Cyprus, and President Vassiliou in particular, had embarked on the path of reconciliation and dialogue aimed at restoring the unity of the country. Similarly, India had taken the same stand in respect of Sri Lanka and supported the territorial integrity of that country against the divisive activities of the ethnic Tamils.

The rest of the speech repeated India's familiar policies relating to nuclear disarmament, the INF treaty and the North–South dialogue. The parliamentarians gave a standing ovation at the end of the speech as it reflected their own aspirations.

After my address to the House of Representatives, leaders of political parties in the House of Representatives met me individually at the Hotel Hilton.

Kyprianou, a former President of Cyprus and the leader of the Democratic Party called on me. I had known him ever since he first visited Madras as the Foreign Minister of Cyprus along with President Archbishop Makarios in the 'sixties. Thereafter I had met him in New York several times along with my colleague, Zenon Rossides of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal. He became President of Cyprus after Archbishop Makarios' demise. He had stubbornly refused to have any dialogue with the Turkish representatives unless they withdrew their occupation of a part of Cyprus. He told me that any negotiations with the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Turkish representatives would be futile and would not lead to any solution. However he did not want to stand in the way of President Vassiliou's negotiations with the Turkish representatives. He said that he was content to wish success to the new President in his endeavours. The President of the Democratic Rally Party, Clerides, was most vocal in support of the negotiations with the Turkish side. He criticised Kyprianou's adamant attitude towards the Turks. He asserted that asking all the Turks who had settled in that part of Cyprus to leave would be unrealistic as they had married Turkish Cypriots and begotten children. Clerides therefore was labelled "concessionist". The other parties had nothing special to mention except expressing pious hopes of a solution to the Cyprus problem.

In the evening I addressed the Indian residents in Cyprus at a reception hosted by our High Commissioner. I assured them that contrary to the impression created abroad by the Press, of India being in turmoil with communal clashes, terrorist violence and social upheavals, life in India continued normally. I gave the instance of Punjab where despite the communal and terrorist violence, the State produced the highest quantity of foodgrains in the previous year.

The Indian newspapers criticised me and wrote article captioned "R.V. decries Indian Press". I was advised by my public relations staff that I should clarify what was stated at the meeting. I declined to carry on the controversy.

On September 20 the President and Mrs. Vassiliou called on us at Hotel Hilton and accompanied us to Larnaca airport. There was a ceremonial departure with the customary guard of honour and salute of guns. We left for Prague in Czechoslovakia.

We arrived in Prague at 1.45 p.m. local time, and were received by President Gustav Husak.

At the Prague Castle, there was another presidential

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

guard of honour — a somewhat unique feature in Czechoslovakia. The Prague Castle is one of the finest buildings in Europe. Built during the glorious days of the Austro Hungarian empire, it has stately halls with full size mirrors, rare paintings and gold painted furniture. Soon after our arrival, we placed a wreath at the tomb of the unknown warrior in the National Memorial on Zizkov Hill. Thereafter, official talks were held with the president who lived in another part of the Prague Castle.

During the talks Husak mentioned his visit to China a fortnight earlier and gave us his impressions of China. He had found the Chinese leaders keen to modernise their industries and improve the quality of life of the people. They had seen Japan developing into a world economic power by building up its industries and were keen, he said, to emulate their neighbour. They realised that in order to achieve this they needed peace within the country and with the neighbours. Husak added that China could be expected to be flexible in its attitude on the Indian border issue as well as other bilateral matters when Rajiv Gandhi visited the country later in the year. Other matters discussed included restoration of peace in Afghansistan, the cessation of hostilities between Iran and Iraq, the INF treaty and nuclear disarmament.

On bilateral issues, Czechoslovakia promised to share its technological know-how with India and also explore the possibilities of setting up joint ventures in India and in third world countries.

After our talks, I met the members of the diplomatic corps in Prague and exchanged views with them. The common topic for discussion was perestroika and nuclear arms limitation. There was a seachange in attitude of the western diplomats to the Soviet Union which they regarded as "untouchable" hardly a year or two back. I rubbed it in that

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

the Non-Aligned Movement had proved right in steadfastly keeping out of power blocs.

The state banquet was held in the magnificent hall in the Prague Palace. There were over 100 guests including the General Secretary of the Party Milos Jakes. Husak spoke warmly of the Indo-Czech relationship and the industrial and technical collaborations with India. About 60 major industrial projects have been established in India and these were units in Ranchi, Tiruchi, Hyderabad, Bangalore and Varanasi. He dealt with the similarity of views between the two countries on all global and international issues.

In my reply I recalled my earlier visits to Czechoslovakia, the last one being in 1983 as Defence Minister. I referred to the establishment of the centre for the study of Indology in the Charles University of Prague and to the noble contribution made by eminent Czech scholars like Prof. Lesny to the study of Indian thought.

On global issues, I pointed out that disarmament was only a negative virtue; its positive side was the establishment of a new world economic order. If peace is indivisible, so is prosperity. There can be no islands of prosperity in an ocean of poverty. The billions of dollars that were being spent on armaments could be used for financing hundreds of development programmes which would alleviate distress among millions of people.

On September 21 we went to the picturesque town of Karlovy Vary, famous for its fountains and spas. In a rare gesture, President and Madam Husak accompanied us on the trip. Karlovy Vary is not only a tourist spot but also a health and nature cure resort. People come here for sulphur and other mineral water baths for cure of rheumatism and similar afflictions. The hot spring is called "Gagarin Colonnade" in honour of the Soviet cosmonaut. The water tastes like soda water and is very pleasant to drink.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

We also visited the Moser glass factory where some of the finest works of cut glass are manufactured. Czech cut glasses are famous throughout Europe. Having organised a glass factory as Industries Minister in Madras 25 years earlier, I was able to blow a glass bulb to the cheers of the factory workers.

Returning to Prague in the evening we attended an enjoyable performance of "Ulysses" by the Laterna Magika Theatre at the Palace of Culture. The Magic Lantern is unique to Czechoslovakia. Here live artists and shadows mix together in the performance of a play. I first saw this when I visited Prague 25 years ago and the technique has advanced very much since then.

On September 22 I had an hour long meeting with General Secretary Milos Jakes. He gave us a rare insight into China which he had visited about three months earlier.

After evaluating Mao Zedong's policies, it was found that 60 per cent of them had succeeded and 40 per cent had failed. Though a necessity, the cultural revolution had damaged China considerably and the Chinese leadership had emerged wiser from it.

China was anxious to build its economy and was taking steps to liberalise it. It realised that it had made several mistakes and that its isolationism had cost it dearly.

It perceived the Soviet Union as the offender which had invaded a part of their territory. They considered Gorbachev a very able and intelligent leader who had taken correct economic and political measures in time. China hoped to restore friendly relations with the Soviet Union but felt that it could never reach the closeness of the '50s.

As regards India, Deng Xiaoping maintained that it was Khrushchev who had provoked India to attack China in 1962. It was ready to settle the border dispute with India on a realistic basis. Husak was of the opinion that when Rajiv

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Gandhi visited China later in that year, he would notice China adopting a more flexible approach towards bilateral issues.

I was taken aback at the rare inside information about China furnished to me by the usually formal and reticent Communist Party leaders. They never speak a word without prior deliberation. I concluded that the Czech leaders desired their views to be passed on to the Prime Minister of India.

I conveyed these observations in a separate letter to Rajiv Gandhi, apart from the usual tour report. He replied: "This will provide a valuable input in the preparations for my forthcoming visit to China."

We visited the Prague Palace Museum containing art treasures, jewellery, memorabilia of monarchs and historic relics. The Palace itself had been expanded by successive monarchs and is therefore a huge meandering building. Once again the urge to organise a similar exhibition at Rashtrapati Bhavan possessed me.

The Mayor of the City of Prague accorded a civic reception and presented me the 'Golden Key' to the City. Thanking the Mayor and the Councillors I referred to the historic beginnings of Prague as a trading centre at the crossroads of Europe and its later development as a great centre of art, architecture, education, science, music and letters. That there was a centre for Tamil studies in Prague, was an added attraction to me. I also paid a tribute to the city's culture, refinement and elegance and added that I had enjoyed them during this, as well as my earlier visits. Adverting to the singular honour of presentation of the key to me, I said, "This is a moment of great joy for me. I shall cherish the key as a key to friendship, solidarity and understanding."

There was a farewell meeting in the Hall of Mirrors with Husak. After thanking the President for his warm welcome

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

and gracious hospitality I expressed deep satisfaction over the fruitful talks I had with the Czech leaders. I also repeated my invitation to Husak to visit India at his earliest convenience.

Husak expressed his pleasure on my visit and the results of the discussions. He hoped that the dialogue would continue at all levels.

As on arrival, there were two ceremonial sendoffs, one with full military honours in the courtyard of the Prague Castle and the other at the airport by President Husak.

Thus ended the 12 day tour of four European countries. The media coverage in the countries visited was generous and the talks and speeches were reported *in extenso*. It showed the high esteem those countries have for India, its history, culture, and industrial and technological progress. They were also aware of the immense market potential of India and were keen to take advantage of it. Each of the countries visited showed interest in joint ventures but wanted total free market conditions as in their own. The Indian media also commented favourably on the outcome of the tour and the possibilities for economic cooperation it had opened.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

15

In October, Mikhail Gorbachev was elected President of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and I sent this message to the Soviet leader: "We in India are sincerely happy at the richly deserved honour which has been conferred on you. I am confident that our bilateral relations will receive further impetus under your leadership and guidance of state matters." I recalled my last meeting with him in Moscow and said I was looking forward to his visit to India later in the year. I praised the Soviet leader's outstanding personal contribution to the cause of world peace and disarmament which had created a new climate in international relations and concluded the message with these words, "I extend to you my best wishes for your good health, happiness and for many more years of fruitful work in your enhanced responsibilities for the welfare and prosperity of your people and for the cause of peace and goodwill in the world."

On October 5, I unveiled a statue of V.K. Krishna Menon at Kozhikode (Calicut). I was closely associated with Krishna Menon in the United Nations delegations, in Congress politics and other activities dear to him. As I admired his qualities, I spoke with great warmth, eulogising his unique personality. He was a rare combination of reason and emotion, logic and passion, sarcasm and affection. He played a memorable role as Secretary of the India League in London during the struggle for freedom and later as High Commissioner to London. As leader of the Indian delegation

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

to the U.N. General Assembly, he raised India's image as a constructive contributor to the solution of world problems. His speech on the Kashmir issue in the Security Council stands out as the ablest defence ever put forward on behalf of India.

I gave unstinted praise for Krishna Menon's contribution to self-reliance in defence through the several production units he set up as these yielded results years later. In my view, the criticism of Krishna Menon for the debacle of 1962 was unfair. In fact, the failure of 1962 was attributable to the earlier policies while the successes in 1965 and 1971 were due to his thoughtful programmes of self-reliance in defence equipment, arms and ammunition.

The conference of Governors, the second during my tenure, was held on October 10 and 11. In my address, I condemned the terrorist menace and averred that the solution to the Punjab problem must be found within the framework of the Constitution. The continued assistance to militants in Punjab and Kashmir from Pakistan came in for severe criticism. Communalism, the price spiral and external debts were identified as danger spots which needed constant and continuous attention. I appealed to the Governors to act as guide, philosopher and friend to Chief Ministers and maintain full communication with the Centre on possible explosive situations and areas.

On October 3, an event upset me greatly. A group of dalits and harijans led by Swami Agnivesh, Arya Samaj leader, tried to enter the Nathdwara temple. It was alleged that they were beaten up. Later, on October 15, a delegation consisting of Swami Agnivesh, Ram Vilas Paswan, M.P. and harijan leader, and a few others called on me and bitterly complained against the maltreatment meted out to harijans in Nathdwara temple. They wanted the Rajasthan Ministry dismissed for violation of the Constitution. I was upset that

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

even after forty years of Independence, the elementary right of equality had not been observed.

In my younger days I had been an enthusiastic supporter of the temple entry programme of Rajaji in Tamil Nadu. I told the delegation that I had always been against untouchability and abhorred the pernicious practice. I recalled that when I became a Minister in Tamil Nadu in 1957, I had taken a harijan as my Personal Assistant and even the top executives in industries had to go to him for assistance. I said I was prepared to go to the Nathdwara temple, taking a few harijans with me. This was flashed in the newspapers with several headlines "R. Venkataraman offers to lead Nathdwara march" and "R.V. to lead Harijans into temple."

When the Prime Minister met me a few days later I told him that discrimination against harijans would tarnish our international image, especially when we were spearheading a crusade against apartheid. Rajiv Gandhi was unable to conceive that such archaic practices still existed and assured me he would talk to Chief Minister Shiv Charan Mathur. Some days later the Chief Minister met me and complained that the whole matter was blown out of proportion. The objection on October 3 was only against one of the members of the party entering the temple with shoes. Nevertheless, I reminded him to see that harijan entry into temples was freely allowed.

I understood that Rajiv Gandhi had also impressed on the Chief Minister the need to remedy the situation. Mathur announced that on November 1 he himself would lead harijans into the Nathdwara temple along with Congress workers, MLAs and MPs. On the announced date, he led a group of 250 harijans and a large number of Congress leaders, drawn from all over the country, into the temple. They all had peaceful *darshan* of the deity. I learnt that the decision to include representative Congress leaders from all

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

over the country was taken by Rajiv Gandhi to demonstrate the party's commitment to Gandhiji's programme of temple entry and harijan welfare. I sent a message congratulating the Chief Minister on the historic event.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

16

For four days starting October 18, 1988, I was on a state visit to Bhutan. This was the first visit by an Indian President to the Himalayan kingdom, after V.V.Giri's in 1974. I had excellent personal relations with His Majesty the King, having met him every time he came to India since 1980.

On arrival at the helipad in Thimpu, the capital of Bhutan, we were received by King Jigme Singye Wangchuk, who introduced members of the royal family, Cabinet Ministers and other dignitaries. The King's sisters are also members of the Cabinet. The traditional 21-gun salute was accorded and all along the route to the State Guest House, Bhutanese boys and girls, in their colourful "Kho" and "Kira" dresses, welcomed us. Flags, festoons and arches greeted us at the guest house. The capital wore a festive look.

Official talks started in the afternoon and lasted 75 minutes. During the first 30 minutes aides were present on both sides and thereafter it was a one-to-one talk. Instead of my going to the palace, the King, in a rare gesture, came to the guest house for the talks. We discussed continuing Indo-Bhutanese cooperation especially in economic development, education and health. During the personal talks, the King gave details of his discussion with China on their border issue and said the talks were continuing. He also explained that he was not favourably disposed to trade relations with China and instead would prefer greater and stronger trade, industrial and cultural cooperation with India. Even though

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

India was a big neighbour, Bhutan was convinced that India would render all help and assistance to the smaller countries without any strings. His Majesty added that he wanted to preserve the ancient heritage of Bhutan, its traditions and culture and was not keen on allowing tourists to come and spoil the placid atmosphere of the ancient land. He mentioned that President Ershad of Bangladesh who visited Bhutan had said that a dam which was being built by India on the river Meghna would divert the waters northwards to the detriment of Bangladesh and suggested that the entire question of river water management should be discussed by a group of countries including China. He said he informed Ershad that this issue should be sorted out between India and Bangladesh bilaterally. The King said he was not in favour of regionalising the river water issue. I clarified that India had no scheme relating to the Meghna.

The King then referred to his talks with the King of Nepal who wanted Nepal declared a zone of peace. The King of Bhutan said that he did not endorse this idea as he felt that a single country could achieve precious little by being declared a zone of peace. I replied that India had opposed this idea for the last 15 years as both unworkable and infructuous.

The King also said King Birendra disclosed Nepal's procurement of arms and military equipment from China because India had turned down a similar request some years earlier. I told the King that no such request had ever been made by Nepal.

On my part, I recalled the visit of Jawaharlal Nehru to Bhutan in 1958 and the excellent rapport he had established with the King's father, His Majesty Dorje Wangchuk, and the ever growing friendship between our countries since then. I also assured Bhutan of all help within our means to build its economy and improve the standard of living of her people.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

As regards China I said the world was changing fast and that old animosities were yielding place to a new era of dialogue and discussion. India's desire to normalise relations with China should be seen from that perspective. The talks concluded on a note of mutual appreciation and goodwill.

At the banquet, the King recalled that he had invited me to visit Bhutan eight years earlier when I was Finance Minister and added that he had waited all these years for it. Praising the striking progress India had made in agriculture, industry, science and technology and the generous technical and financial assistance rendered to Bhutan for its five-year plans, he said that the Chukha hydro-electric project was an outstanding symbol of Indo-Bhutanese friendship and cooperation. He also praised India's role in international affairs and in the Non-Aligned Movement for promoting peace and security in the world. He added, "The ties of friendship and understanding between our two countries have grown through the bonds of our historical heritage. For centuries our people have interacted closely in the areas of religion, culture and trade and commerce. As members of the South Asian family we have always felt a sense of kinship and affinity for each other."

Replying to the toast I thanked His Majesty for the royal welcome and hospitality. "Our relationship," I said, " is multifaceted and has deep historical, religious and cultural roots. Nothing can stand in the way of our developing and continually enriching these time immemorial ties." I reiterated India's commitment to continue to assist Bhutan to meet its developmental and other needs in the years to come.

On October 20 we went sightseeing. We arrived at Paro by helicopter and were received by the King. Paro, the former capital, is the most beautiful valley of Bhutan. We drove up to the compound gate of Ugenpelri Palace whence we were

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

received in a ceremonial procession of singers, dancers, village officials and monks. This reminded me of the receptions which local people used to give me in villages when I went on my election campaign in 1952. Later we visited the famous Kyichu monastery which dates back to the eighth century A.D.

Returning to the palace we witnessed an archery match between Paro and Thimpu teams. Side by side with the competition there was a programme of folk and mask dances. Witnessing the show, the King drew my attention to the platform, still preserved there, from which Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had addressed a gathering in 1958.

On October 21, I inaugurated the Chukha hydro-electric project constructed at a cost of Rs. 244 crores. It consists of four units of 84 MW each, making a total of 336 MW of installed capacity. The power-house is located underground and the work had to be executed in mountainous terrain at heavy risk. After completion, it has turned out to be a marvel of engineering in this area. The general manager of the project, Narayana Rao, was indeed the proudest man of the day.

After inspection of the project and unveiling of the plaques, we attended a commemoration meeting. The King had arranged a short music recital by M.S. Subbulakshmi. Among the pieces she rendered was 'Nagendra Haaraaya', a song dedicated to Siva. Listening to that song in the Himalayas, where Siva is believed to have had his abode, was an ethereal experience. The Ganga is believed to flow out of Siva's matted locks and there was an appropriateness to the song rendered at the inauguration of a hydel project. The music was enthralling and Bhutanese audience appeared to be in a trance.

Addressing the gathering, the King said, "Chukha is in

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

every sense a truly cooperative venture, for not only was it implemented jointly but also the benefits from it will flow in equal measure to both the countries." He acknowledged that the project could not have been undertaken without India's generous help with men, money and materials. The King felt that while in the past, Indo-Bhutan relationship rested on close personal friendship, this project, the result of mutually beneficial cooperation, had added a new dimension to the relationship.

In my inaugural address, I complimented the engineers and staff on executing the scheme which involved the diversion of the waters of the Wangchu river through a mountain tunnel to an underground power-house and called it an "engineering feat". I assured Bhutan that India would continue to provide assistance to projects in this Himalayan region. Regretting the damage caused to the ecology by giant industrial projects, I said I was happy that the Chukha project had taken great care to avoid such damage to nature.

Back in New Delhi, on October 24 I presented, in a glittering ceremony, the silver trumpet and banner to the President's Bodyguard, the oldest and seniormost regiment in the Indian Army. It was raised by Warren Hastings in 1773 and designated as "The Governor's Troops of the Mughals". When Warren Hastings became Governor-General in 1784, the regiment assumed the name "The Governor-General's Bodyguard." When the Crown assumed powers from the East India Company, the regiment was informally called "The Viceroy's Bodyguard" and when India became a Republic, it became "The President's Bodyguard."

During its eventful existence for over 215 years, it had served in combat in 1965 and 1971. It also participated in the IPKF's operations in Sri Lanka. I delivered a short address praising the regiment for its long tradition and

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

meritorious service and handed over the silver trumpet and the President's banner amidst thunderous applause.

In the Indira Gandhi assassination case, Satwant Singh, Kehar Singh and Balbir Singh were sentenced to death by the trial court in 1986. The sentence was confirmed by the Delhi High Court in December 1986. On August 3, 1988, the Supreme Court acquitted Balbir Singh and confirmed the sentences on Satwant Singh and Kehar Singh. Kehar Singh's review petition was also rejected by the Supreme Court in September 1988.

On behalf of Kehar Singh, a former employee of the Directorate of Supplies and Disposals, a petition seeking clemency was filed in the office of the President on October 14, 1988, under Article 72 of the Constitution. The petition also requested stay of the execution. On October 18, Ram Jethmalani, a senior advocate of the Supreme Court, wrote to me "in all humility" that the Supreme Court had gone "grievously wrong" in holding Kehar Singh guilty and that the President should "safeguard against a possible failure" of justice. On October 18, the Supreme Court stayed the execution of the death warrants against Satwant Singh and Kehar Singh till November 1, 1988.

On October 21, a Cabinet Minister conveyed to me the advice of the Government to reject the petition on behalf of Kehar Singh. The Government felt that there should be no interference with the decision of the Supreme Court rejecting the appeal of the condemned prisoners. In the Government's opinion it was not an ordinary murder case but one which involved the assassination of a duly elected Prime Minister of the country.

Meanwhile, Jethmalani requested me to grant him an oral hearing on behalf of Kehar Singh. I looked into the past practices relating to "oral hearing" on mercy petitions. Rajaji as Governor-General had declined to hear oral represen-

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

tations on mercy petitions. Dr. Kailas Nath Katju, Home Minister, had also taken a similar view, in a noting on a file. I consulted the Attorney-General who confirmed these views. The Attorney-General also gave his opinion that the President was bound by the advice of the Council of Ministers according to the proviso to Article 74 of the Constitution even when dealing with mercy petitions under Article 72. The Attorney-General relied on the Supreme Court judgment of 1974 in Shamsher Singh's case. Accordingly, the President's Secretary, Prem Kumar, wrote to Jethmalani, "In accordance with the well established practice in respect of consideration of mercy petitions, it has not been possible to accept the request for a hearing on behalf of the convict."

Jethmalani is one of those who never take a refusal. He again sent a long letter stating that his representation was not a mercy petition but one which questioned the very judgement of the Supreme Court and that according to the British practice, the Crown could go into any fresh material to correct any miscarriage or failure of justice.

Meanwhile, the same Cabinet Minister who met me earlier called on me and urged me to accept the recommendation of the Government to reject the mercy petition. Since there was a stay of the execution granted by the Supreme Court, I consulted the Attorney-General on the legality and propriety of rejecting the mercy petitions. The Attorney-General clarified that though constitutionally the proceedings before the President under Article 72 were separate and independent from the proceedings before the Supreme Court, propriety would need my deferring a decision till the stay of execution was finally disposed of. I therefore told the Cabinet Minister politely but firmly that I could not in all propriety take a decision while the matter was pending in the Supreme Court. A few days later, the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Supreme Court dismissed the special leave petition moved on behalf of Kehar Singh. I got a copy of the order from the Attorney-General and thereafter accepted the recommendation of the Home Minister to reject the mercy petition.

I advised the Cabinet Minister that though I had rejected the mercy petition, it would be better if the sentence was not carried out before Guru Nanak's birthday on November 23. Besides, I had arranged a prayer congregation in Rashtrapati Bhavan as homage to Guru Nanak on November 21 and did not want that to be marred. The Government readily accepted this suggestion.

During October I sent two communications to the Prime Minister. The first one related to the deletion of Sanskrit from the group of optional languages offered by schools governed by the Central Board of Secondary Education. Prior to the change, students in these schools could offer English, Hindi or Sanskrit as a third language. But after the change, they could not offer Sanskrit and had to offer one "modern" language like Kannada, Urdu or Punjabi. I had received a number of representations from parents and teachers and also from religious heads. I requested Rajiv Gandhi to examine the feasibility of restoring Sanskrit as an optional third language.

Rajiv Gandhi replied that the change was made for the purpose of implementing the three-language formula under which students were obliged to learn a language currently used in some part of the country as a positive step towards national integration. He said that the Minister for Human Resource Development would explain the position personally to me.

The other suggestion related to certain proposals for reforms in direct taxes. Rajiv Gandhi wrote back: "The suggestions have been examined. I am happy to inform you that the Finance Ministry is in substantial agreement with the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

proposals regarding.... Appropriate amendments to give effect to these changes are being framed...." I am citing these instances to show the level of consultation, advice and guidance that prevailed between the President and the Prime Minister.

The centenary celebration of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was held on November 11 at Vigyan Bhavan with great solemnity and dignity. Azad was a man of principle. He believed in Hindu-Muslim unity and in a secular state. He rejected the two-nation theory advanced by Mohammed Ali Jinnah and opposed vehemently and steadfastly the Partition of India. He regarded Partition as a defeat and would have preferred even the postponement of independence.

The Vice-President and the Prime Minister joined me in paying glorious tributes to the departed leader and appealed to the people to emulate the Maulana's ideal for communal harmony.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

17

On November 14, 1988, we paid floral homage to Jawaharlal Nehru at Shantivan on his 99th birthday. I inaugurated the year-long centenary celebrations of this great architect of modern India and released the commemorative coins issued on the occasion. In my address which some newspapers described as "thought provoking", I said that Nehru was a democrat of democrats, a socialist of socialists and was therefore able to combine democracy and socialism. Planning in those days was associated with authoritarianism of the Soviet model. Nehru's planning stemmed from democratic discussions, debates and parliamentary approval. He was the architect of the secular policy that became the bedrock of the Indian polity and a way of life. He fought relentlessly for the emancipation of women and the Hindu Code Bill bears testimony to his valiant efforts in that direction. His concept of a mixed economy, in which the public and private sectors had a complementary role in development, was a unique contribution to the economic thinking of the time.

Nehru became a global personality and was recognised as one of the elder statesmen of the world. In a world which knew only two camps, namely, the belligerent and the neutral, Nehru introduced a new concept of non-alignment which ensured the newly independent Third World countries freedom of action in the political and economic spheres. His strong plea for 'co-existence' of different

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

political systems and economic ideologies, though not accepted during his life time, is now recognised as a sane principle of international relationship.

There were several other functions connected with Nehru in the *balwadis*, youth organisations and schools. It was a day of celebration everywhere.

Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao of Andhra Pradesh was reported to have announced the appointment of Rajendranath Agarwal, a retired Judge of the Delhi High Court, as 'Lok Ayukta' of Andhra Pradesh even before the appointment was cleared by the Governor. When the file went to Governor Kumudben Joshi on November 14, she returned it with some queries. One of the queries was whether Agarwal was appointed chairman of a three-member commission of enquiry constituted by the Andhra Pradesh Government in 1987.

The State Government, while confirming the fact, pointed out that Agarwal could not assume the office of chairman as the Andhra Pradesh High Court had stayed the proceedings of the commission. The Governor again returned the file with a few more queries which annoyed the Chief Minister.

The Chief Minister sent a communication to me stating that he had made a recommendation for the appointment of Agarwal after due consultation with the Chief Justice of Andhra Pradesh High Court and after complying with all the formalities. He also informed me that a writ petition filed against his recommendation for the appointment was dismissed by the High Court with the observation that Agarwal did not suffer any disqualification. The Chief Minister wanted me to take action against the "erring" Governor.

Leaders of the opposition parties in Parliament wrote to me that the Governor, under Article 163 of the Constitution, was bound by the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers and that the Governor had no discretion in the appointment

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

of the Lok Ayukta either under the Constitution or under the Lok Ayukta and Upa Lok Ayukta Act of Andhra Pradesh. It was urged that the President should tell the Governor to adhere to the provisions of the Constitution. The leaders also met me on November 25 and made strong representations. On the constitutional issues involved, I asked Somnath Chatterji, M.P. and an expert in constitutional law, whether the President could issue directives to the Governor or dismiss the incumbent. Somnath Chatterji replied that though the President had no powers to issue directives or dismiss the Governor, he could always counsel and advise the constitutional functionaries. I asked whether the Governor had discretionary powers in the matter of appointment of the Lok Ayukta. Chatterji answered that according to the Supreme Court, the Governor was bound by the advice of the Council of Ministers in this matter.

Since the President had no powers over the Governor independently of the advice of the Council of Ministers, I forwarded the representations to the Home Ministry for "necessary action".

Around this time, Soviet President Gorbachev planned a visit to India for participating in the closing ceremony of the Festival of the Soviet Union in India and for receiving the Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development. It was a three-day visit from November 18 to 20. Gorbachev had scheduled important meetings with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on global and bilateral issues. It was even regarded as an Indo-Soviet summit meeting. The presence of a high-power delegation consisting of the Deputy Prime Minister, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Culture and other dignitaries accompanying the Soviet President lent credence to the expectation of some significant results out of the visit. Nor were these expectations belied, since during the visit six major agreements were signed and

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Soviet credit of Rs 5,440 crores was pledged to India. The agreements covered projects for building nuclear and thermal power stations, double taxation relief and cultural exchanges.

Gorbachev made three major speeches during his stay. one in reply to the toast at the banquet in his honour, the second on accepting the Indira Gandhi Prize and the third at the closing ceremony of the Festival.

At the banquet, the Soviet President dismissed with contempt certain reports that Moscow was becoming cool towards India and changing its priorities. He said, "I shall not dignify with an answer such totally groundless and obviously speculative assertions," adding that "the relations between Soviet Union and India are grounded in similarity, often leading to an identity of our views as regards the meaning and goals of world development." Expanding the idea he said, "Soviet-Indian friendship rests on firm foundations and has nothing to do with any transient considerations or schemes."

Referring to the global situation Gorbachev emphasised the need to end confrontation. "The concept of a nuclear weapon-free and non-violent world not only seems out of the ordinary, it is also in fact revolutionary," he asserted. He appeared to be in full control of the new structural changes and confident of leading his country to an era of prosperity. He had chosen his banquet speech for dispelling doubts about our bilateral relations, consequent on the economic changes in his country.

In my welcome speech I described the Soviet President as a *shantidoot* — an ambassador of peace — and complimented him and the American President on the Intermediate Range Nuclear Force Treaty. I wished that they had gone further and signed a treaty for a fifty per cent reduction in strategic nuclear arsenals of both the countries and had also agreed to

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

keep outer space free of nuclear weapons.

The Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development was presented to the Soviet President at a glittering ceremony at Vigyan Bhavan in the presence of the nation's highest dignitaries, diplomats, parliamentarians and members of the jury headed by former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere.

Presenting the award I praised Gorbachev's endeavours to bring peace to humanity all over the world. I described him as the most distinguished statesman of our times and added that the award of the Indira Gandhi Peace Prize was a fitting recognition of the historic contribution he had made towards a saner and safer world. I also praised Gorbachev for the courage and vision with which he had initiated a set of ideas and actions that could lead the world out of conflict and violence. "What you have attempted goes beyond diplomacy to statesmanship, beyond politics to philosophy," I told Gorbachev.

Rajiv Gandhi made an emotional speech referring to the contribution that his mother Indira Gandhi and grandfather Nehru had made towards peace and disarmament and to peaceful co-existence between East and West. He described the Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation, concluded with the Soviet Union in 1971 by Indira Gandhi, as a historic one.

The citation stated that the Indira Gandhi Award for 1987 for Peace, Disarmament and Development was being given to President Gorbachev in recognition of the "bold and imaginative proposals" to initiate a positive and practical process of nuclear disarmament and his vision of a non-violent world free from nuclear weapons.

I then presented the cash prize of Rs 1.5 million, a plaque and citation. The plaque was made of haematite jasper, said to be millions of years old and had in it a miniature portrait

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

of Indira Gandhi in the Moghul style. Amidst thunderous standing ovation, Gorbachev received the award.

Gorbachev's acceptance speech underlined the importance of cooperation between China, India and the Soviet Union for peace and security of Asia, the Pacific region and the world. Realising the importance of Asia and the entire Pacific region in the scheme of international security, Gorbachev said he had, in his Vladivostok Declaration, called for efforts to improve the situation with the participation of all countries concerned, including the United States and Soviet Union. He noted with satisfaction the evolving relationship between China and India and indicated that a Sino-Soviet summit meeting was not far away.

The Soviet leader deprecated the role of Pakistan and the United States in wrecking the Geneva Agreement on Afghanistan and considered that peace in Afghanistan was essential for stability of the region. Exuding an air of hope and confidence, the Soviet leader said, "Today we are demonstrating to the entire world how two great nations can work together on the basis of trust for their own benefit and without prejudice to others. The traditions of our relations are fruitful, the opportunities are great and the future is in our hands."

Foreign Minister Shevardnadze announced that Gorbachev had donated the prize amount to the House of Soviet Culture in New Delhi. The speech was greeted with the longest standing ovation I had ever known.

India had never before witnessed anything like the closing ceremony of the Soviet Festival staged at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium on November 19. The year-long festival was inaugurated by General Secretary Gorbachev and Rajiv Gandhi in 1987. The Soviet artistes had travelled to a hundred cities in India and enthralled millions of people.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Contacts between musicians, dancers, gymnasts, and theatre artists established during the Festival enriched genuine 'Dosti-Druzhba' between the people of these two countries. I was informed that the warmth and cheers showered on the Soviet artistes wherever they went had left an indelible impression on them.

At the commencement of the show, the customary speeches were made by me and the Soviet President emphasising the importance of cultural exchanges for building friendship and cooperation between peoples and nations. In a reference to the internal situation in the Soviet Union, Gorbachev said, "A powerful whirlwind of change has swept through the land of Soviets and millions of people are set to blaze a new trail into the future by seeking to restructure their social and state edifice."

In my address, I expressed pleasure at the success of the festivals in India and the Soviet Union and observed that they had "surpassed even our most optimistic expectations".

The two-hour closing ceremony was like a dream. The Soviet artistes kept the 20,000-strong audience spellbound with their kaleidoscopic patterns of colour and movement. The show began with artistes drawn from different Soviet Republics as well as Indian folk dancers performing with superb mastery. As a mark of friendship, Indian dancers garlanded their Soviet counterparts. Then the gymnasts performed some breathtaking feats. The show was stolen by Olympic champion gymnast Elena who received cheers for each one of her feats. The Brioska group of dancers who framed out in rainbow colours, the Russian ballet and the renowned Russian circus kept the audience enthralled. Finally the Soviet artistes bid 'Dasvidaniya' ('We will meet again') to India in unforgettable style and grandeur.

Speaker Mavlankar's centenary was celebrated in the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Central Hall of Parliament on November 26. The function was attended by members of Mavlankar's family. Delivering the commemoration address I praised Mavlankar's contribution to our parliamentary system. He was a parliamentarian who observed and also enforced correct procedures in the House, maintained absolute impartiality, guided the debates on proper lines and set healthy precedents. His rulings were fair, objective and mature and stand even today as beacons of wisdom. So great was his reputation among parliamentarians of the Commonwealth that he was the first non-white to be elected Chairman of the General Council of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

After my rejection of the mercy petition on behalf of Kehar Singh, warrants for execution were issued fixing December 2 for carrying out the sentence. A last ditch effort to save the condemned prisoners was made by Jethmalani before the Supreme Court, challenging the Presidential order. He contended that the President had failed to exercise his jurisdiction by declining to hear representations on behalf of the prisoners and refusing to go beyond the decision of the Supreme Court on facts. The Supreme Court granted interim stay of the execution.

An important legal issue was raised in this case. The question whether the President is bound by the advice of the Council of Ministers or could act independently when exercising powers under Article 72 of the Constitution was left undecided in the Billa and Ranga case in 1981 in which they were sentenced to death for killing two children.

On December 16, the Supreme Court delivered the judgement holding that the condemned prisoners had no right to insist on oral presentation of arguments before the President and the manner of consideration of the clemency plea lay within the discretion of the head of state. It was open to the President in exercise of the powers vested in him under

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Article 72 of the Constitution to scrutinise the evidence on record and come to a different conclusion from that recorded by the Court in regard to the guilt of the accused and the sentence imposed on them.

The Supreme Court, however, did not advert to the issue whether in exercising the powers under Article 72, the President had discretion, independent of the advice of Council of Ministers. Since the Supreme Court had earlier decided in Shamsher Singh's case that the President was bound by the advice of Council of Ministers in exercising the power of pardon, I referred the whole matter again to the Home Ministry for a thorough examination of all aspects. Several newspapers commented that the President should "look into the matter", that he could "no longer be asked by the Government to act as it advises him in the matter," and "whether the accused lives or dies is in one man's hands".

There was an impression in the public mind that the President in person decides mercy petitions while in law and in fact he has to accept the advice of the Council of Ministers. Journalists and lawyers writing about the Supreme Court judgement called it 'historic' and reiterated that the President had plenary powers of pardon. I however stuck to my view that it was for the Government to go into all aspects of the case including additional materials furnished later in the mercy petitions untrammelled by the decision of the Supreme Court, and tender advice to me.

On December 19, the Cabinet, after due consideration, decided to reject the mercy petitions. When this decision was conveyed to the Secretary to the President, I pointed out to him that the Supreme Court had wanted the matter to be dealt with afresh and that therefore it might be necessary to call for any additional information from the condemned prisoners. I was told that the Law Officers of the Government had given the opinion that no further opportunity need be

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

given to the accused.

The Home Minister and the Law Officer of the Government called on me on December 25 and presented a draft order which read: "Having considered the materials in this case and the mercy petitions submitted on behalf of the convicted persons, I hereby reject the petitions."

This draft, I said, would imply that the President had come to the conclusion independently in his personal capacity. I therefore suggested an alternative: "I have perused the records. In accordance with the advice of the Council of Ministers, the mercy petitions of the condemned prisoners for any relief under Article 72 of the Constitution are hereby rejected." The file formally came to me on December 26 from the Home Ministry and I passed orders on the above lines.

The prisoners were informed of the rejection of mercy petitions on January 2, 1988. Frantic efforts were made on their behalf to move the High Court and the Supreme Court with habeas corpus petitions. The Delhi High Court rejected the petitions on January 3. The Supreme Court also dismissed another petition filed by Kehar Singh seeking revocation of the death sentence.

On January 6 Satwant Singh and Kehar Singh, sentenced to death in the Indira Gandhi assassination case, were executed in the Tihar Jail.

Kehar Singh's case raised a few queries in my mind. First, should not the President have discretion to examine any extenuating circumstance and alter the death sentence without the advice of the government? How else can prejudice or partisanship be prevented? Absence of such a power unnecessarily brings blame to the President. Only jurists understand that the word 'President' is a shortened form for the Central Government. Others, including educated people, often criticise the President for acts and omissions of the government as orders are issued in the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

name of the President.

Secondly, that the President (i.e., the Central Government) has plenary powers to review sentences in criminal cases at any time, has never been in doubt. In the famous case of Beck who was convicted on mistaken identity, the British Crown (Home Secretary) exercised the power after a lapse of several years when the mistake was discovered. I am of opinion that in the conditions prevailing in the country this power of review should vest with the judiciary and not with the President, i.e., the Executive. It is well known that in cases of political clashes, the ruling party takes the upper hand and if after conviction by court, the President, i.e., the Executive, exercises clemency for those convicted, the rule of law will be desecrated.

I have ventured to record these thoughts so that there may be some enlightened debate on them.

In most of the universities, Governors are ex-officio Chancellors and function under the specific statutes relating to the universities. Questions have arisen often whether Governors were bound by the advice of the Council of Ministers in matters relating to their functions as Chancellors. Sometimes legal proceedings against Governors in their capacity as Chancellors have been initiated. In one of the Governors' Conferences, I had, as Vice-President, drawn attention to this issue and even suggested that Governors need not be put to this discomfort.

In West Bengal, the Governor declined to accept the recommendations of the Government in one case of appointment of Vice-Chancellor. In December 1985, the Governor of Bihar appointed seven Vice-Chancellors and three Pro-Chancellors ignoring the panel sent by the State Government. Thereupon, the Chief Minister directed the incumbents not to hand over charge to those appointed by the Governor. In Kerala, Calicut University resolved to implement the U.G.C.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Jammu

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

scales of pay for its staff. The Left Front Government objected to the decision on the ground that the implementation of the scheme in the Calicut and other universities would cast a heavy financial burden and asked the Vice-Chancellor to reverse his decision. On the Vice-Chancellor's refusal, the State Government submitted a draft ordinance to the Governor empowering the Government to remove the Vice-Chancellor. The Governor delayed the ordinance for some time by returning the file with a number of queries and finally reserved the draft ordinance under Article 200 for the consideration of the President.

All these were reported to me and my intervention was sought. In one of my routine meetings with Rajiv Gandhi, I mentioned to him the growing tension between Governors and Chief Ministers in university affairs and asked him to ensure, by legislation or otherwise, the principle of Governors accepting the Chief Ministers' advice on university matters. I said the President, as visitor to several universities, had been told by the Law Ministry that the advice of the Cabinet on questions relating to universities was binding on him under Article 74. I suggested that this could be extended to the relationship between Governors and Chief Ministers. Rajiv Gandhi had a habit of taking notes of points made during discussions on small slips which he always carried in his pocket. I was told that he fed them into the computer for reference later. But nothing came out of these discussions.

President Gayoom of Maldives, Chairman of SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation), came to Delhi on a working visit for two days. On December 8 I had talks with him and followed it up with a lunch in his honour. During the discussion Gayoom expressed profound thanks for India's quick and generous intervention in aborting the coup in his country on November 3, 1988, and for restoring normalcy. I remembered Rajiv Gandhi ringing me up and

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

telling me about the coup in an agitated mood and consulting me about the despatch of Air Force contingents to Male, the Maldives' capital, immediately. I told Gayoom that Rajiv Gandhi acted with expedition and the Indian forces had done a quick job of mopping up the rebels. Gayoom explained that what occurred on November 3 was not a coup by dissident groups within the country but an invasion by mercenary forces who were mostly Sri Lankan terrorists. He wanted to strengthen the defences of Maldives and for that purpose needed India's expertise in a great measure.

India's prestige as a helpful neighbour went up after the timely support it gave to Maldives. It also established the strike capabilities of our defence forces.

The 40th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was celebrated by the International Law Association (Regional Branch), India. Chief Justice of India R.S. Pathak, Justice E.S. Venkataramaiah and a number of eminent judges, lawyers and social activists attended the meeting. In my address I stated that the record of the Indian judiciary in upholding human rights was creditable and recalled that in A.K. Gopalan's case, the Supreme Court decided that fundamental rights under Article 32 could not be curtailed or diluted by parliamentary legislation. I cited cases where laws or executive actions contrary to Fundamental Rights had been nullified by courts. Likewise, unreasonable restrictions on Fundamental Rights had been invalidated. Our courts had also enforced the International Covenant on Human Rights on the basis of acceptance of international conventions, such as equal pay for equal work and the covenant relating to children.

I said that India had valiantly fought for human rights during its struggle for independence and many of the articles in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights had been incorporated in Chapter III of our Constitution. As the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

largest democracy in the world, India had an important role to play in protecting and preserving human rights not only within the country, but also in the entire world.

On December 14, V.P.Singh, Janata Dal leader, wanted to present a memorandum along with a number of *padayatris* who had come to Delhi. I learnt that Sanjay Singh, an accused in the Syed Modi murder case, was among them. I politely told the deputationists that propriety precluded me from meeting a person accused of a serious offence and that the request for a meeting might be abandoned. I learnt that V.P. Singh appreciated my delicacy in the matter and decided that the memorandum be despatched to me.

On December 18 Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi spent an hour with me discussing his China visit prior to his departure later that night. Elaborate preparations had been made for this epoch-making event of the first visit to China by a Prime Minister after 34 years. Foreign Secretary K.P.S. Menon, Indian Ambassador to China, Ranganathan and top-notchers in the External Affairs Ministry were working feverishly on speeches, briefs, notes, memoranda, etc. The Indian delegation which consisted of the then Foreign Minister Narasimha Rao, Water Resources Minister Shankaranand, Commerce Minister Dinesh Singh, Minister of State Natwar Singh, the Foreign Secretary, the Cabinet Secretary and officials, bespoke the importance India attached to the Prime Minister's visit to China.

Rajiv Gandhi explained to me all the preparatory work done, the talks scheduled and the issues he proposed to discuss. I reminded him of what the Czechoslovakian leader had said about his assessment of Mao Zedong's policies and the emergence of Deng Xiaoping as the pre-eminent leader. The Prime Minister said candidly that he did not expect any spectacular results from the tour of China but hoped to create a climate of understanding for a dialogue on all bilateral

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

issues. He was confident of restoring the broken links, as the mood in China was changing in favour of economic liberalisation and political flexibility. He talked of the agreements proposed to be signed during the visit and hoped that they would be the harbinger of a new era of co-operation. He also said he understood that the border issue would not figure prominently in the discussions and that he expected both sides to reaffirm their faith in peaceful solution of the problems through dialogue and discussions. Rajiv showed no nervousness about his crucial meeting and was a picture of confidence. I fully endorsed the line he had chalked out and wished him all success in his endeavour to break the stalemate of over three decades.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

18

The New Year Day of 1989 started with greetings from the staff of Rashtrapati Bhavan in the Moghul Gardens where frolicking children vied with one another to shake hands with me. It was followed by greetings from the Vice-President, Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers, members of Parliament and the elite of Delhi. Several citizens' associations also organised small programmes on the occasion.

On January 10, I presented the Sangeet Natak Akademi awards in Lucknow. Complimenting Uttar Pradesh on its rich cultural heritage, I recalled that the music of Pandit Omkar Nath Thakur and Ustad Bismillah Khan had flowed together like the sacred rivers Ganga and Yamuna. I said that aesthetics and arts cannot co-exist with hatred and violence and that traditional arts and crafts generated goodwill and harmony. I emphasised that it was culture, and art and crafts which had held the country together and preserved its unity over thousands of years. I bemoaned the tendency to relegate arts to the margin and to adopt bizarre colours and loud music. Complimenting Kumar Gandharva who was awarded the prestigious Akademi Fellowship, I described his music as truly "divine", which elevated the singer as well as the audience.

On the next day I participated in the birth centenary

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

celebrations of Acharya Narendra Deva at his native place, Sitapur. I surprised the audience by speaking in Hindi and telling them that when the Acharya toured Tamil Nadu, I had the privilege of translating his speeches into Tamil. I said Narendra Deva was a resplendent personality who believed in the Marxist doctrine of the labour theory of value and at the same time in the Gandhian philosophy of non-violence. The Acharya was also a great scholar in Buddhist literature and had produced the famous work, *Buddha Dharma Darshan*. His socialism was therefore an amalgam of Marxist thought, Buddhist philosophy and Gandhian methods. It was more than a mere coincidence that Jawaharlal Nehru and Acharya Narendra Deva were born in the same year; they were kindred spirits.

January is a month of hectic activities in Delhi. The Republic Day parade, the reception in the Moghul Garden, the colourful Beating the Retreat, Martyr's Day, Anti-Leprosy Day, all crowd into this month. In my Republic Day address, I voiced the nation's anguish over the continued assassinations and murders of innocent people in Punjab and appealed to the public not to get provoked into indiscriminate retaliation against the followers of other religions. Adverting to the economic situation in the country, I said that the problem of poverty had to be tackled by adequate transfer of resources through rural development programmes. I underscored the need for a just and equitable distribution of the fruits of production and for measures for the relief of the unemployed. I said that though the phrase "economy drive" had been repeated ad nauseam, no patient had ever suffered from a good prescription being repeated.

Those honoured with Padma Vibhushan awards on the Republic Day were Uma Shankar Dikshit, veteran political leader, Dr. M.S. Swaminathan, eminent agricultural scientist, and music maestro Ustad Ali Akbar Khan. That great

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

friend of India who championed India's freedom relentlessly in Britain, Fenner Brockway, was honoured with Padma Bhushan posthumously.

At the Republic Day function, the guest of honour was General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam, Nguyen Van Linh and Madam Linh. Ever since the days of Jawaharlal Nehru and Ho Chi Minh there had been close and friendly ties between India and Vietnam and India had always been supporting the valiant struggle of the Vietnamese against foreign forces. The Vietnamese struggle against the mighty United States is a saga of courage, bravery and sacrifice. As usual, there was the parade and march past by the Services and cultural events.

In the evening I hosted a reception to diplomats, officers and the elite. I had great difficulty in restricting the number of invitees to three thousand. I had experienced, in previous years, the utter confusion at the Moghul Gardens when a very large crowd had been invited for the reception. It was more like moving in Chandni Chowk, jostling with people, than attending an elegant function. This reduction in the number of guests resulted in caustic comments among the non-invitees, while it was deeply appreciated by the guests.

On January 27 Rajiv Gandhi had a 90-minute meeting with me. He gave me an account of his talks with Nguyen Van Linh and the Vietnamese views on the Cambodian issue. Rajiv Gandhi said that the Vietnamese were prepared to withdraw from Cambodia if the U.N. could ensure the formation of a coalition government and control and prevent the rebel activities of Khmer Rouge.

Rajiv Gandhi then referred to the poll debacle for the Congress(I) in Tamil Nadu where the DMK, the AIADMK and the Congress(I) had fought the elections separately. In this three-cornered fight, the DMK, which polled about 35 per cent votes, emerged as the majority party with 154 seats

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

in an Assembly of 234 members. The Congress trailed in third place winning 27 seats and forfeiting deposits in the majority of the constituencies it contested. Rajiv Gandhi felt very unhappy with the way he had been briefed about the Tamil Nadu situation and said he realised that he had been misled by his advisers. He was critical of the leaders of the Congress and Union Ministers from Tamil Nadu who had egged him on to go to the polls without any alliance with the regional parties. He also discussed some changes he wanted to effect in the Cabinet.

The President of the Republic of France, Francois Mitterrand, accompanied by his wife Danielle Mitterrand, paid a state visit to India for four days from February 1. His programme included official talks with the Government of India, presentation of the Légion d'Honneur to the renowned director and film producer Satyajit Ray and inauguration of the year-long Festival of France in India.

The French President was accorded a grand welcome in the forecourt of Rashtrapati Bhavan. Thereafter he and his wife and members of the French delegation met me and my aides, Margaret Alva, Minister, Alfred Gonsalves, Secretary, External Affairs Ministry, Prem Kumar, Secretary to the President and our Ambassador to France. I recalled my visit to Paris in June 1986 for the closing ceremony of the Festival of India in France and the elegant function which President Mitterrand had organised at the Elysee Palace and the fruitful discussion we had then. Mitterrand was very effusive about the success of the Festival of India and particularly mentioned the great crowds that Peter Brook's *Mahabharata* drew in Paris. He was positive that creative art had immense potential for developing friendly relations between people of different nations. We discussed about trade with EEC countries and the share of India in the future set-up of the European single market. As a socialist, Mitterrand was more

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

positive about the North–South dialogue and for appropriate debt relief to developing countries. We discussed about transfer of technology, more particularly high technology, to developing countries. The French President affirmed that there was no difficulty in transferring 'high tech' to India which had the capacity to absorb it in full measure and that detailed discussions would follow during his visit.

In my speech at the banquet I hosted for Mitterrand and his wife, I referred to the need for a global approach to the problem of disarmament which comprised nuclear, conventional, chemical and biological weapons. I urged that the focus should shift from military security to economic and social security and that only an equitable world economic order could achieve it. In that context the North–South dialogue assumed a great urgency, I reiterated. I hoped that President Mitterrand would be able to persuade the group of seven industrialised nations to take a more positive attitude to the needs of the Third World countries.

Mitterrand in his reply made warm references to Indo-French relations and to the growing areas of cooperation between the two countries. He paid glowing tributes to the Festival of India in France and said the French people deeply appreciated Indian art and culture. Alluding to the absurdity of the inequitable distribution of wealth and consumption between the rich and poor countries, the French President said that there was a danger of world disorder unless the imbalance was corrected.

The French President's visit raised prospects of greater cooperation between India and France in industrial and technological areas.

The Supreme Commander's review of the naval fleet is a red-letter day for the Navy. The entire Navy looks forward to the event with great enthusiasm. The naval strength of the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

country is displayed and officers and ratings feel proud of their past achievements and present glory. Not all Chiefs of the Naval Staff have the chance to lead such a display, as such reviews are held only once in five years.

On December 15 there was a spectacular display of the naval force in Bombay, the seventh since Independence. The Prime Minister, Union Cabinet Ministers, State Governors, diplomats, former Chiefs of the Naval Staff and senior Defence personnel participated in the review. Neatly anchored in eight rows spread over 35 km in the Bombay harbour, were our Navy's fighting ships, Coast Guard vessels and others belonging to the Institute of Oceanography, the ONGC (Oil and Natural Gas Commission) and the Mazagon Docks.

During the earlier review in which I participated as Defence Minister, the President's vessel was stationary and the other ships sailed past offering salute. On this occasion my yacht, INS Pondicherry, moved through the lines and I acknowledged the cheers of *Rashtrapati ki jai*. Notable among the vessels on display were sturdy warships INS Ranjit, INS Rajput, the aircraft carriers Vikrant and Virat, missile boats, submarines including the nuclear propelled Chakra, and the prestigious Sea Harriers of the Navy's air arm. I am sure the display would have caused a little bit of envy among the navies of the world.

Addressing officers and men of the Navy, I recalled the maritime traditions of India and the adventurous sailing to countries like Cambodia, Indonesia and further east, a thousand years ago. I complimented the Navy on its fighting fitness and its glorious defence of our sovereignty and integrity. Characterising naval development as maritime renaissance, I referred to the pioneering status accorded to India in deep seabed mining and to our Antarctic expeditions. In the evening there was the ceremony of

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

'Beating the Retreat', after which I switched on lights displaying the Gateway of India and all the ships anchored in the sea. It was an unforgettable sight.

On February 21, I addressed both Houses of Parliament assembled together for the Budget session. As I have said earlier, this address is prepared and approved by the Cabinet and sent to the President in advance. Since it is a statement of the government I seldom interfered with the text. In my view, the President's and the Governor's addresses are anachronisms and a blind imitation of the British practice. Very often the speech contains tall and doubtful claims and controversial statements. Sometimes Governors have been faulted for contradicting themselves, while they were only mouthing the views of the government in office. I had tried to change the practice by substituting Prime Minister for President, but without any response. At the end of my address there was some shouting from a member. I learnt later that he objected to the omission of any reference to the Mandal Commission in the speech. The erudite member could have had the patience to raise it during the debate on the address but possibly he yielded to a the temptation to attract attention.

The President of Turkey, Kenan Evren, came on a state visit to India on February 22. He was treated to a ceremonial welcome and a state banquet with all the usual pomp and glitter. Turkey is a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and has often toed the Western line. However, it had supported the Palestinian cause and recognised the Palestinian state. At the banquet, I referred to the unhappy situation in Afghanistan and the continued arms supply from outside despite the Geneva Agreement and to the fratricidal massacre going on in that country. I complimented Turkey on its constructive role on the Palestinian issue and hoped that a just and lasting solution would be

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

found for the Palestinian problem. I said that relations between Turkey and India had vastly improved since the visit of the Turkish Prime Minister, Turgut Ozal, to India in 1986 and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's visit to Turkey in 1988.

Replying to the toast, President Evren said that he wished all parties concerned would "join in finding an acceptable and workable solution based on the decisions of the Afghan people, without any external interference." He welcomed the initiative taken by India to create a new atmosphere of dialogue and understanding with Pakistan and China and said this had opened up prospects of improved relations with those countries. He hoped that the ongoing negotiations between Turkish and Greek Cypriots under U.N. auspices would result in the establishment of a bi-communal and bizonal federation based on political equality of the two sides in Cyprus. The Turkish President was eager to explain that his country's association with Pakistan and Iran was commercial and did not stand in the way of co-operation with other countries like India.

Emperor Hirohito of Japan, who died on January 7 at the age of 87 after 62 years on the throne, was accorded a ceremonial funeral on February 24 after customary rites. The monarchy in Japan, traditionally regarded as living divinity, suffered a jolt with the country's defeat in the Second World War. The funeral was attended by representatives of 163 nations and 26 international organisations. Included in this list were quite a few royal families, Presidents, Vice-Presidents and Prime Ministers of several countries. Despite rain and bitter cold with the temperature around 3°C, hundreds of thousands of Japanese lined the route of the funeral procession. The funeral ceremony lasted about three hours.

The Indian delegation included the then Foreign

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Minister Narasimha Rao, the Foreign Secretary and the Ambassador to Japan. We arrived in Tokyo on the morning of January 23. The same afternoon we were received by Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko. I conveyed to them our condolences on behalf of the government and the people of India. Emperor Akihito, after thanking us, recalled his visit to India as Crown Prince in 1960 and added that he had very fond memories of the visit. I extended to him an invitation to visit India again. Thereafter we called on the then Prime Minister Takeshita and offered our condolences. The Prime Minister appreciated that India had declared three days' mourning for the Emperor and had sent its head of state to the funeral.

I took the opportunity of the presence of a large number of heads of state and government at Tokyo for bilateral meetings. Our ambassador had sought meetings with a number of foreign dignitaries, thinking that many of them may not fructify within the short time. However, as it happened, almost everyone had allotted time and was eager to meet us. Thus, I met George Bush of the United States, the Presidents of Indonesia, the Philippines, Egypt, Germany, Portugal and Zambia, the King of Bhutan and the Vice-President of Yugoslavia.

My talks with Bush were very fruitful. I explained to him our endeavour to improve relations with our neighbours, China, Pakistan and Bangladesh. At the same time I did convey our anxiety over the American supply of sophisticated arms to Pakistan. I also mentioned the clandestine assistance rendered to terrorists and militants in Kashmir and Punjab by Pakistan. I pointed out that the United States had become our largest trading partner and that trade was still growing. I also thanked him for his assistance in the transfer of items of high technology and super computers. I extended an invitation to Bush to visit India preferably

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

before the general elections due towards the end of the year.

Bush recalled fondly his visit to India as Vice-President and the private dinner he had with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi at her residence with only family members present. He expressed sadness over Indira Gandhi's assassination. Bush said he had noted India's anxiety with regard to the supply of arms to Pakistan and added that he would look into it. In reply to his query about Pakistan's assistance to terrorists and militants, I told Bush that we had positive evidence about it. The American President thanked me for the invitation to visit India and added that he would have to look into his schedule.

My meeting with President Suharto of Indonesia gave me a picture of his efforts to find a solution to the Cambodian tangle. Suharto said that the purpose of the Jakarta meeting was to provide an opportunity for Cambodian leaders to work out a solution for themselves and to that extent it was a good beginning. Delinking the cessation of supplies of outside arms to various factions in Cambodia from the question of withdrawal of Vietnamese forces was, in his view, a positive step. He said that Vietnam had agreed to a time schedule for withdrawal of its forces and this would create the climate for setting up a provisional government in Cambodia. He mentioned the initial moves for normalisation of Indonesia's relations with China.

President Corazon Aquino of the Philippines expressed warm appreciation of India's industrial progress, and health and social services. She was keen to benefit from India's experience in organising a public health system. I expressed readiness to extend cooperation in this field as well as in small-scale industries where India had gathered wide experience. Regarding Cambodia, she felt that it would be useful to involve countries like India in the process. The Foreign Secretary Manglapus said that a distinction should

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

be drawn between the Khmer Rouge and its leader Pol Pot and that there should be no return of a Pol Pot regime.

Hosni Mubarak, the Egyptian President, spoke about the past relations between India and President Nasser and about the new challenges to the Non-Aligned Movement. He thought that in the changed international climate, the NAM should devote attention to economic issues such as North–South dialogue and a new International Economic Order. On Namibia, Mubarak said that so far they had no information if South Africa might create any problems for holding free elections. President Kaunda of Zambia, whom also I met, had however serious doubts whether South Africa would stand by the arrangement. For the resolution of the Palestinian problem, President Mubarak felt that an international conference would afford the opportunity for a settlement. He, however, said Israel unfortunately had a feeling that either China or the USSR might try to impose a solution at the conference, even though he had tried to allay Israel's apprehensions.

I was deeply impressed with the President of the erstwhile Federal Republic of Germany, Dr.Weizsäcker, who called on me. He has a dignified and scholarly bearing and speaks with gentle moderation. On bilateral issues he was confident of relations between India and West Germany moving to greater heights and of larger German investments in India. He welcomed the easing of tensions between East and West and the change in the political climate in Europe.

Vice-President Dolanc of Yugoslavia was worried about his country's internal economy and the spiralling inflation and growing indebtedness of all Third World countries. He called for a new definition of the Non-Aligned Movement in the context of the changed political climate.

President Soares of Portugal called on me and offered warm greetings to India. He said that the Portuguese

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

government had made a mistake in 1961 and should have negotiated on Goa with Nehru. The Socialist Party to which he belongs wanted to have friendly relations with India, he asserted. He revealed that he had already issued directions to his country's banks for solving the problem of gold pledged with them by the people of Goa and he hoped a satisfactory solution would be arrived at.

During these talks I could discern a growing respect for India and its positive role in world affairs. I sent a detailed note to Rajiv Gandhi on my talks.

On February 27, the prestigious Nehru Award for International Understanding was presented to Javier Perez de Cuellar, the then Secretary-General of the United Nations, at a grand function in Vigyan Bhavan in the presence of the Vice-President, the Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers, diplomats and the elite of Delhi. Conferring the award I referred with deep satisfaction to the distinct improvement in the climate for peace in the world during the past few years. I said the Geneva Agreement and the cessation of hostilities in Iran and Iraq were in no small measure due to the efforts of the United Nations and more particularly to the dedication and commitment of de Cuellar to the cause of the people. That the United Nations had been awarded the Nobel Prize for its success in peace-keeping operations, was a fitting recognition of its increasing role in world affairs. I expressed the hope that the U.N. would turn its attention to the amelioration of the economic conditions of the Third World countries and the establishment of a new International Economic Order. I specially complimented de Cuellar on his dedication to the cause of international understanding and his commitment to make the world a more fit and humane place for the suffering millions.

Accepting the honour, de Cuellar called for greater use of multilateral agencies for the settlement of disputes and for

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

nations to avoid bypassing those agencies. Describing India as a "microcosm" of humanity, with its diverse religions, castes, creeds, languages and cultures, de Cuellar said the qualities of tolerance and understanding and response to sensitivities of various sections of society were needed in a great measure to tackle issues. The Secretary-General, paying glowing tributes to Jawaharlal Nehru as a great leader of the present century, said that Nehru combined vision with realism, looked at situations in the global and historical perspective and stood for equity as the ruling principle of relations between nations.

I wrote two letters to Rajiv Gandhi in March 1989, the first relating to the unseemly scenes created in State legislatures during the Governors' addresses. I said even advanced States like Maharashtra and West Bengal were no exception to the lack of decorum and the Congress Party which ruled at the Centre was not behind others in this kind of behaviour. I once again suggested that the institution of the Governor's address to the legislature might be deleted by a suitable amendment. I was hurt by the heckling of a respected and senior academician like Governor Nurul Hasan by Congress members of the West Bengal Legislature.

The second related to the Thakkar Commission Report (on the assassination of Indira Gandhi). Over 60 members of Parliament presented a memorandum to me saying that the purported synopsis of an important part of the Thakkar Report published in the *Indian Express* contained serious charges against R.K. Dhawan, Special Assistant to Indira Gandhi, at the time of her assassination and demanded publication of the report. At my oral request, the Government unofficially furnished me with a copy of the Thakkar Commission Report. I did not read the voluminous report, nor the appendices. I read the synopsis and was not persuaded about any needle of suspicion pointing to any

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

person. Besides, R.K. Dhawan, whatever his faults, was to my knowledge totally devoted to Indira Gandhi and had nothing to gain from her assassination.

I forwarded the representation formally to the Prime Minister for appropriate action. When I met Rajiv Gandhi a few days later, I told him that the way Parliament was handled left much to be desired. I said unnecessary confrontation was generated over small things which could gracefully be conceded and kudos earned for it. I admitted that I had not read the whole Thakkar report or the voluminous evidence presented with it but what I had seen gave me the feeling that the Report could be presented to Parliament. I suggested that this idea be examined by his staff and advisers. The Prime Minister announced in the Lok Sabha his decision to table the Report a few days later. I presume that the decision had already been taken since the announcement came very soon after my talking to Rajiv Gandhi.

The Palestine Liberation Organisation had, by a proclamation, become the Palestinian State and India was one of the earliest to accord recognition to it. Its President, Yasser Arafat, made his first official visit to India as head of the Palestinian State on March 9. He had visited India many a time before and was a dear friend, but this was his first visit after his official 'elevation' and so held a special significance. He was accorded an enthusiastic welcome with a 21-gun salute.

Speaking at the banquet hosted in honour of the head of the Palestinian State, I acclaimed the bold initiatives that Arafat had taken for the solution of the Palestinian problem and added that even the United States had acknowledged that constructive and realistic programmes presented by Arafat had created a positive climate for resumption of the West Asian peace process. I said that the international

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

community must address itself to the fundamental issue of the Palestinian people's right to a homeland of their own and to live in peace and security within its borders. I reaffirmed India's continued and unstinted support to the cause of the Palestinian people.

Arafat, after thanking India for its sustained support over all these years, wanted the international community to exert pressure on Israel to change its attitude in line with changing world conditions. He said that his talks with the USA had a good start and hoped that it should lead to some results. He reemphasised the need for an international conference on West Asia under U.N. auspices. For his part, he said he had extended the hand of cooperation for a just, fair and equitable solution to the Palestinian issue.

Immediately after I became Defence Minister in 1982, there was a grand air power display at the Tilpat Range on the Haryana border. Seven years later, there was a similar demonstration of air power at the Tilpat Range on March 18, 1989. By all accounts, it was a unique and spectacular display. No one, not even those in the top echelons of the Air Force, had seen the best and the most sophisticated aircraft in action at the same time. The display by Jaguars, MIG 27, MIG 29, Mirage 2000, support aircraft IL 76, AN 32, MI 25 and 26, in all by 126 aircraft, which lasted 100 minutes, was a breathtaking event. There was a demonstration of ground attack, attack by helicopter, gun strikes, landing by para-troops and finally some stunning aerobatics. The display clearly established our mastery over the most sophisticated machines, be it MIG 29 or Mirage 2000. It also demonstrated the might of the Indian Air Force.

Rajendra Kumar Jindal, a resident of Delhi, filed an application before the President seeking the disqualification of 100 MPs on the ground that they were sitting members of the seventh Lok Sabha and were holding "offices of profit"

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

and therefore were not competent to contest the elections to the eighth Lok Sabha. He contended that since the eighth Lok Sabha was constituted with disqualified members, it should be dissolved.

I referred the matter under Article 103(1) of the Constitution to the Election Commission. It opined that the petitioner's contention related to disqualification, if any, prior to and at the time of election to the Lok Sabha and that pre-election disqualification could be challenged only by means of an election petition presented to the High Court in accordance with the provisions of the Representation of the People Act. The Commission advised that the petitioner could not raise the issue of disqualification before the President under Article 103(1) of the Constitution. The Commission also referred to the decision of the Supreme Court that membership of Parliament was not an office of profit. I thereupon rejected Jindal's petition on March 23, 1989.

On the same day I rejected another petition by Dr. Pandian of Madras against Murasoli Maran, M.P., alleging that the member had violated the oath of allegiance to the Constitution of India by his writings, including incitement to burn the Constitution of India. The Election Commission, to whom the petition was referred in accordance with the requirement of the Constitution, was of the view that burning the Constitution was a breach of the oath or affirmation taken under the Constitution to bear true allegiance to it and to uphold the sovereignty and integrity of India. However, according to a decision of the Kerala High Court, this was not one of the grounds for disqualification mentioned in Article 102 of the Constitution and it was impermissible to import any additional ground for disqualification. The Election Commission advised that Murasoli Maran had not incurred any disqualification on

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

any of the grounds stated by the petitioner.

The important measure with far-reaching consequences adopted by Parliament, of reducing the age of voting from 21 to 18 years, was presented for assent in March 1989. After the requisite number of States had ratified it the measure received my assent.

The President of Cyprus, Dr. George Vassiliou, paid a state visit to India from April 11 in response to the invitation extended to him during my visit to that country the previous year. He was accompanied by a 24-member delegation including businessmen. In our talks and at the banquet we repeated the points made in our earlier talks. Vassiliou said that negotiations for resolving the Turkish Cypriots issue under the U.N. auspices were slow and did not give much hope of a breakthrough. He wanted the Turkish Cypriots to inject a measure of urgency to the negotiating process. He criticised the presence of 35,000 Turkish troops in Cyprus as a flagrant violation of international law. Finally, Vassiliou thanked India for its firm and principled support to the unity and integrity of Cyprus and added that his proposal for a bi-communal federal system for Cyprus was fair, reasonable and conciliatory.

On April 18, I addressed a convention of Gandhian constructive workers at Gandhigram, near Madurai. Comparing the French and Soviet revolutions with the Indian, I said the Indian revolution under Gandhiji's leadership was non-violent and based on a new concept. Many countries under colonial domination had achieved freedom without resorting to armed struggle in the twentieth century by following the Gandhian path of non-violence. The Indian revolution was not purely political but also a social reforms movement which ushered in ideas of equality of man, irrespective of caste, creed, religion and sex; it recognised the honour and dignity of man and made him and his village

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

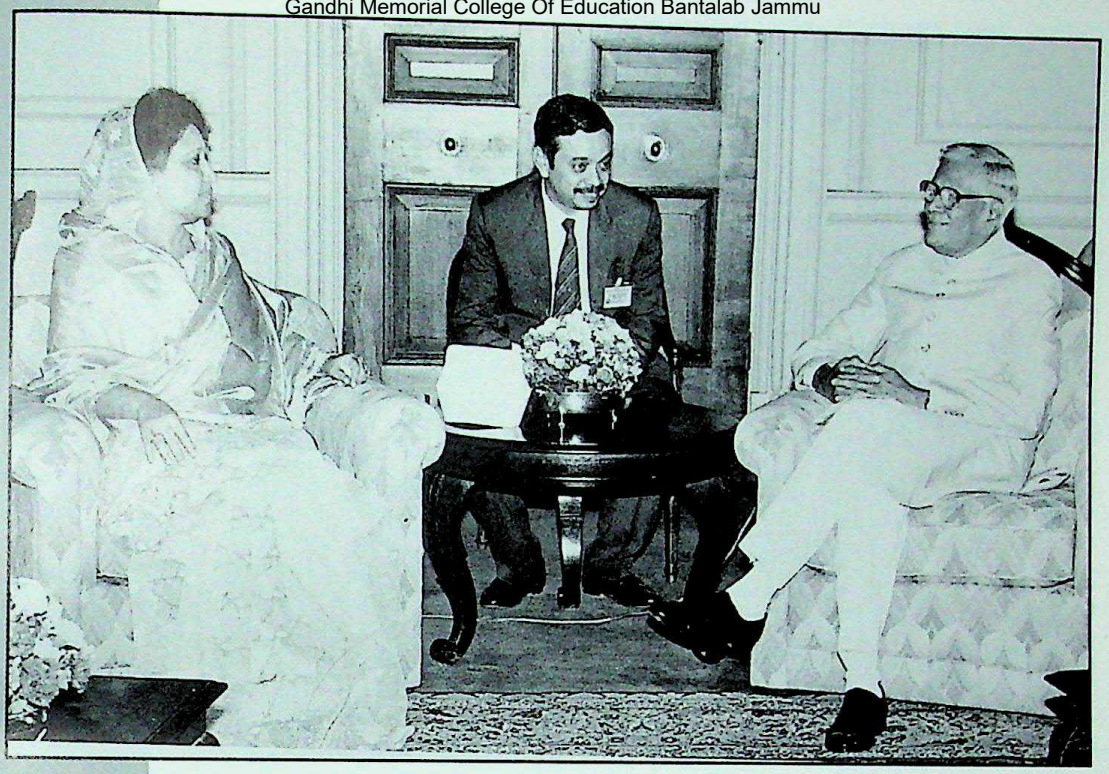
Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

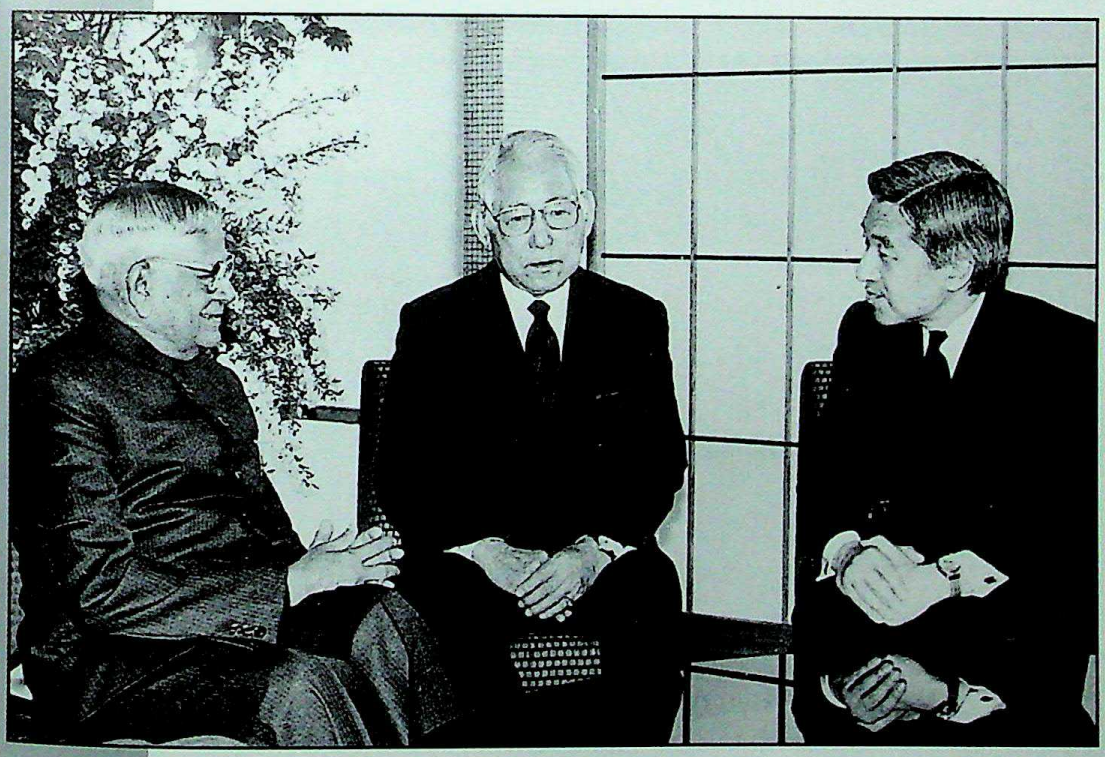
self-reliant. Explaining the rationale behind the Khadi movement, I pointed out that while the unemployed in the developed countries were paid doles, khadi provided employment and enabled the unemployed to eke out a livelihood with dignity. Gandhiji's advocacy of prohibition was not only for the welfare of poor people who make up 70 per cent of the population but also for the moral elevation of man. By adopting prohibition, society could be cleansed of crime, disorderly and demeaning behaviour and ugly law and order situations. I called upon Gandhian workers to educate the masses on the evils of drinking. I pointed out that Gandhian philosophy was timeless and transcended all frontiers. In a world resounding with the din and clash of armaments and living under the threat of global destruction through nuclear weapons, a world where 20 per cent of the population consumes 80 per cent of the resources accentuating the gap between the rich and the poor nations, and a world where self-aggrandisement is the motive force, it is only Gandhian philosophy that can bring sanity and security to humankind.

The Janata Party under Ramakrishna Hegde had formed the government in Karnataka in March 1985. Later, Hegde resigned as Chief Minister following allegations that he had authorised illegal tapping of telephones of various leaders, though this had no bearing on the current crisis. S.R. Bommai was elected leader by the Janata Legislature Party in place of Hegde, and formed the Ministry in August 1988. When the Janata Party split into Janata Dal and Janata Party, Bommai continued as leader of the Janata Dal. The position in the Karnataka Assembly of 221 members was that the Janata Dal had 111 members and was supported by seven Independents, while the Congress(I) had 65 members and the Janata Party, 27. Bommai was expanding his Cabinet from time to time, the last being an addition of 10 Ministers on April 15,

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu





top: With Prime Minister Khaleda Zia of Bangladesh.

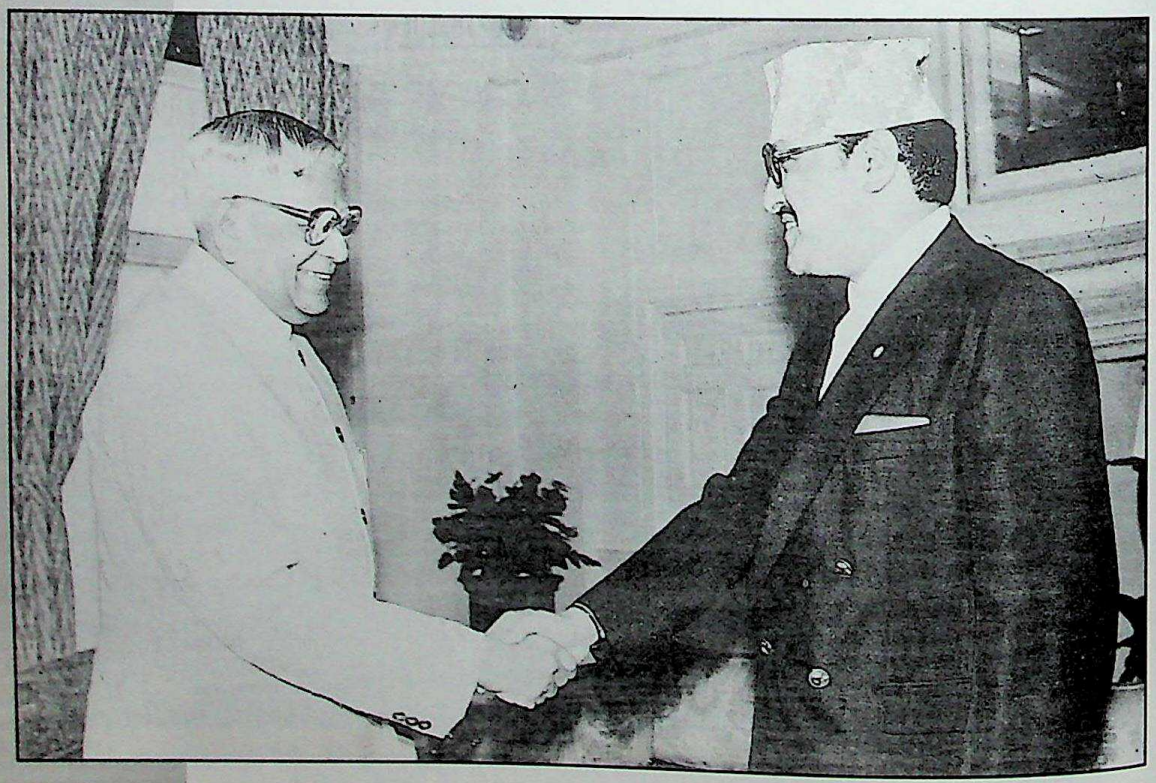
below: Talking to Emperor Akihito of Japan.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

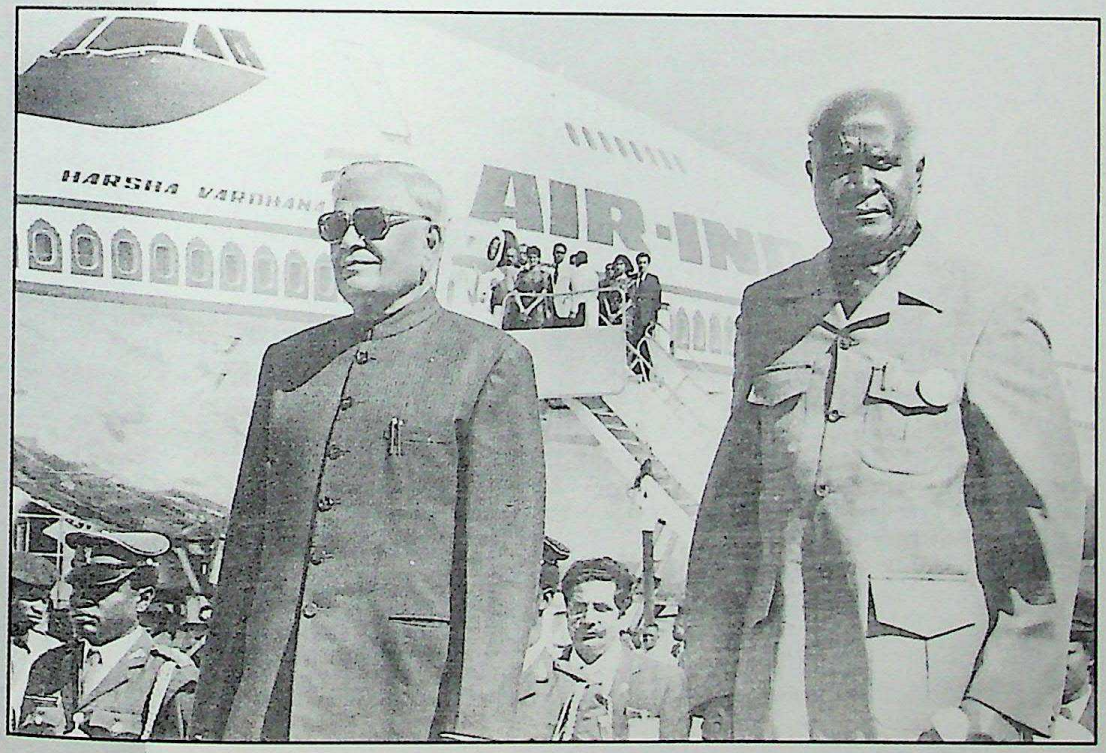
left: Ceremonial welcome by the President of Finland at Helsinki (14.9.88).

below: Receiving His Majesty the King of Nepal.



CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

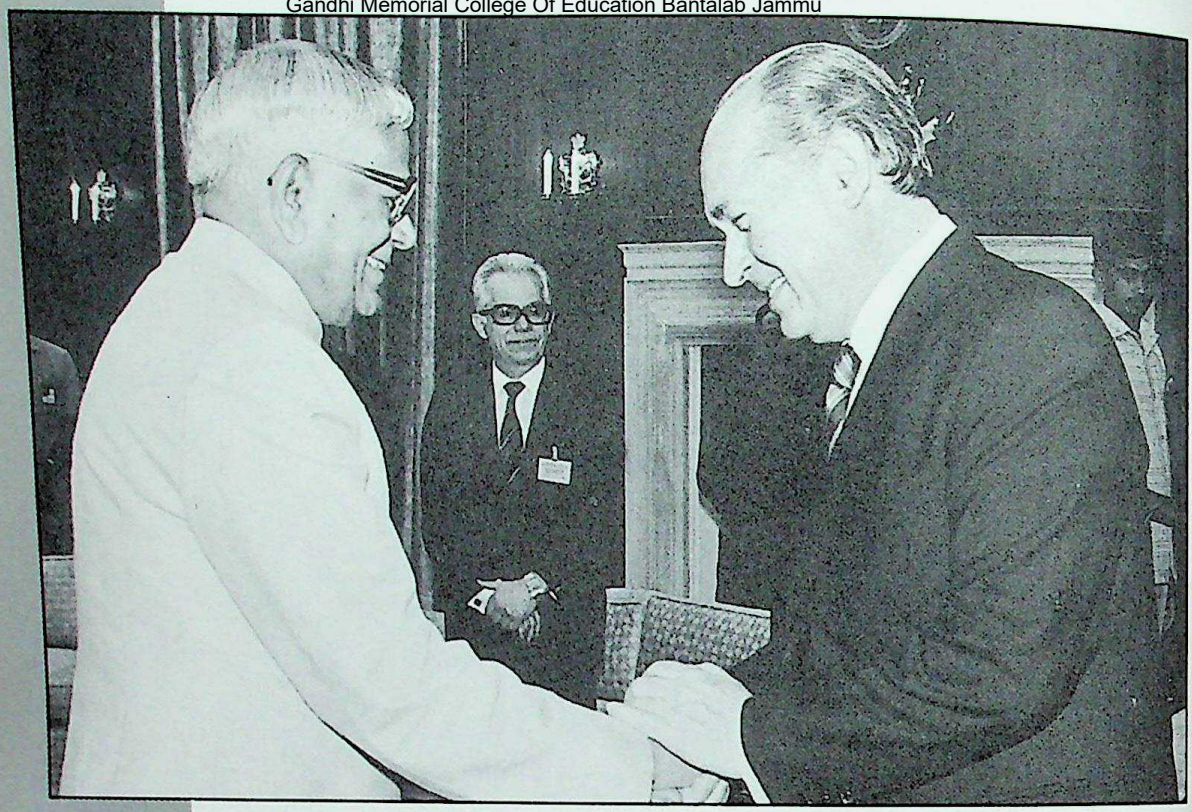


top: With President Mugabe of Zimbabwe at Harare (6.6.89).

below: Ceremonial reception by President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia (8.6.89).

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

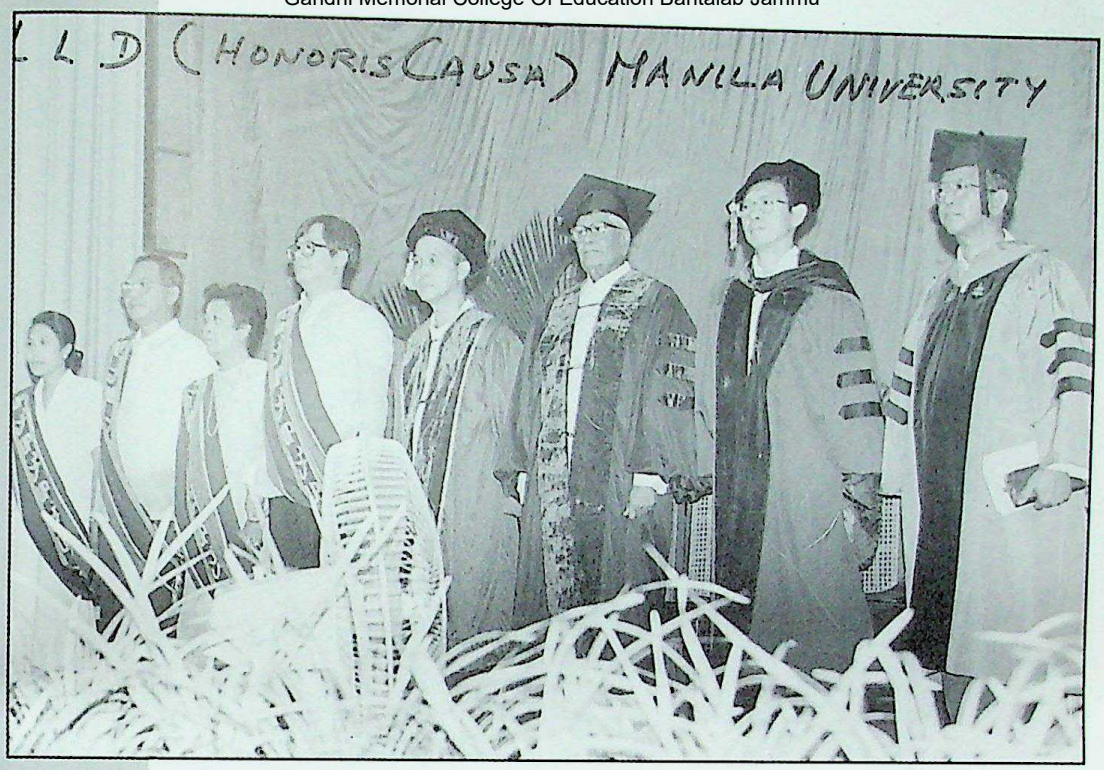


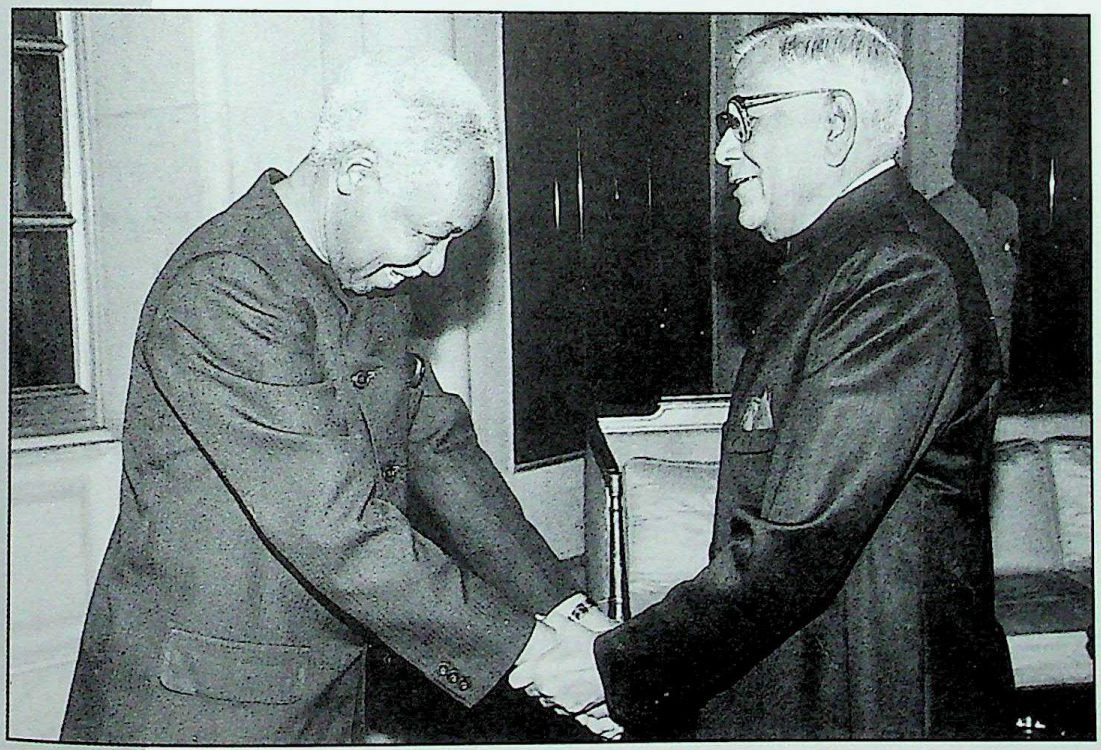
above: With President Vassilion of Cyprus.

CC-0. Ag[illegible]n Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

left: With Prince of Wales (24.5.91).

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu



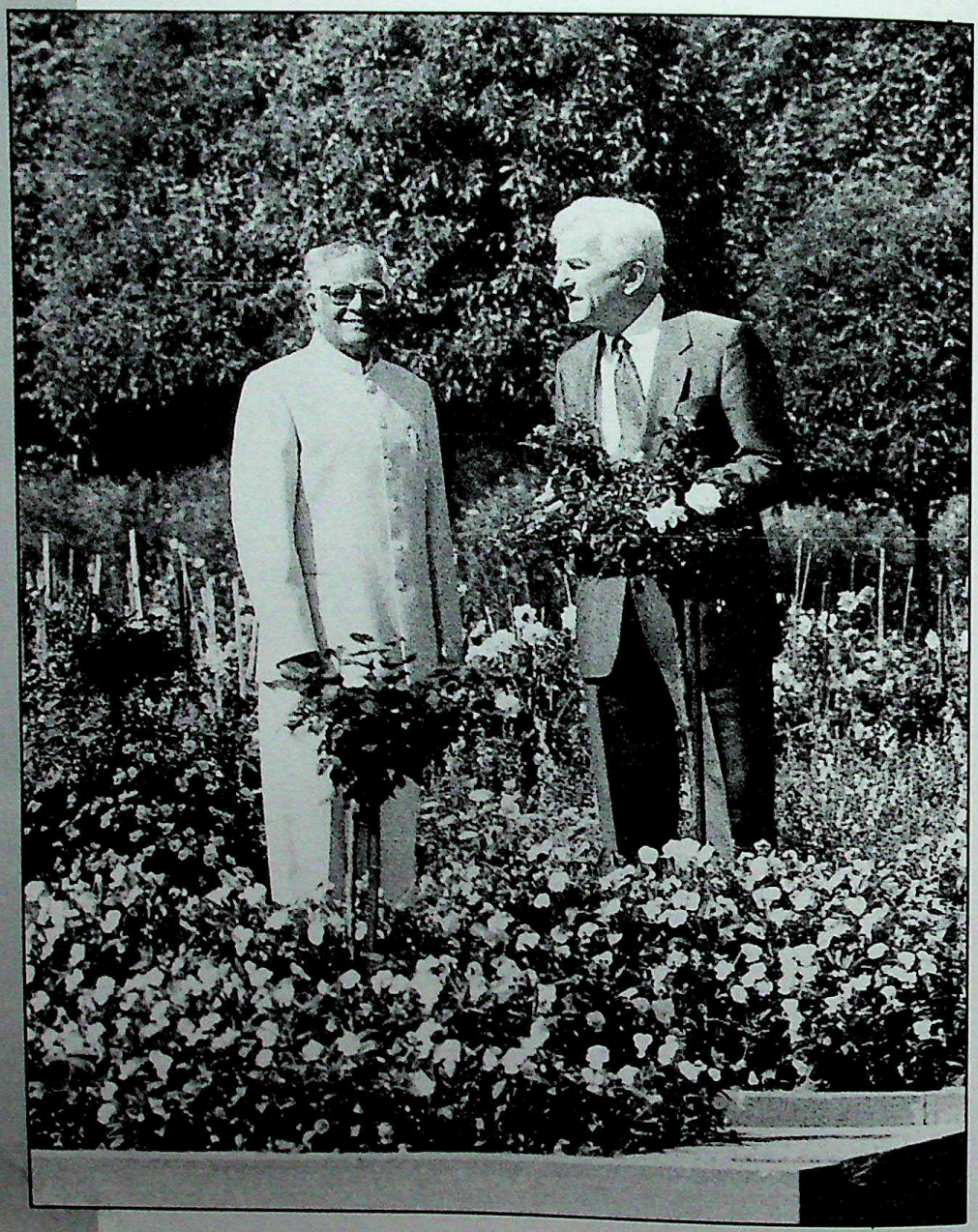


top: Award of Doctorate by Philippines University (30.4.91).

below: With Julius Nyerere.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

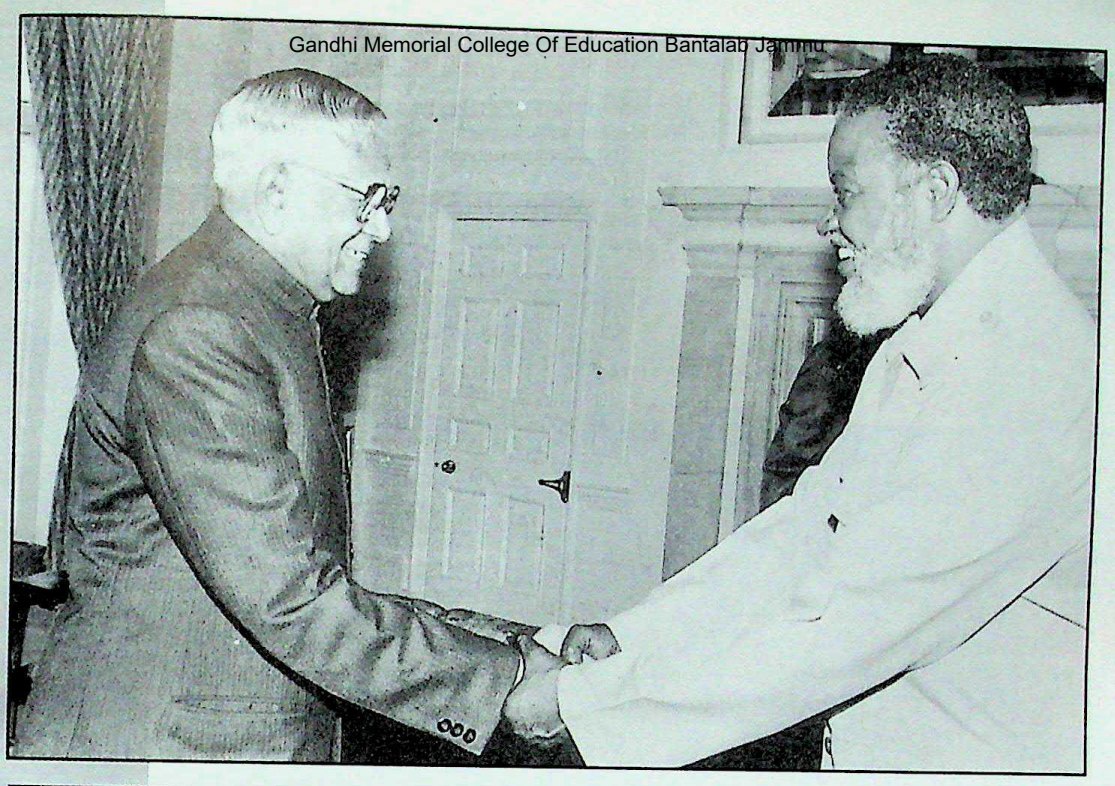
Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

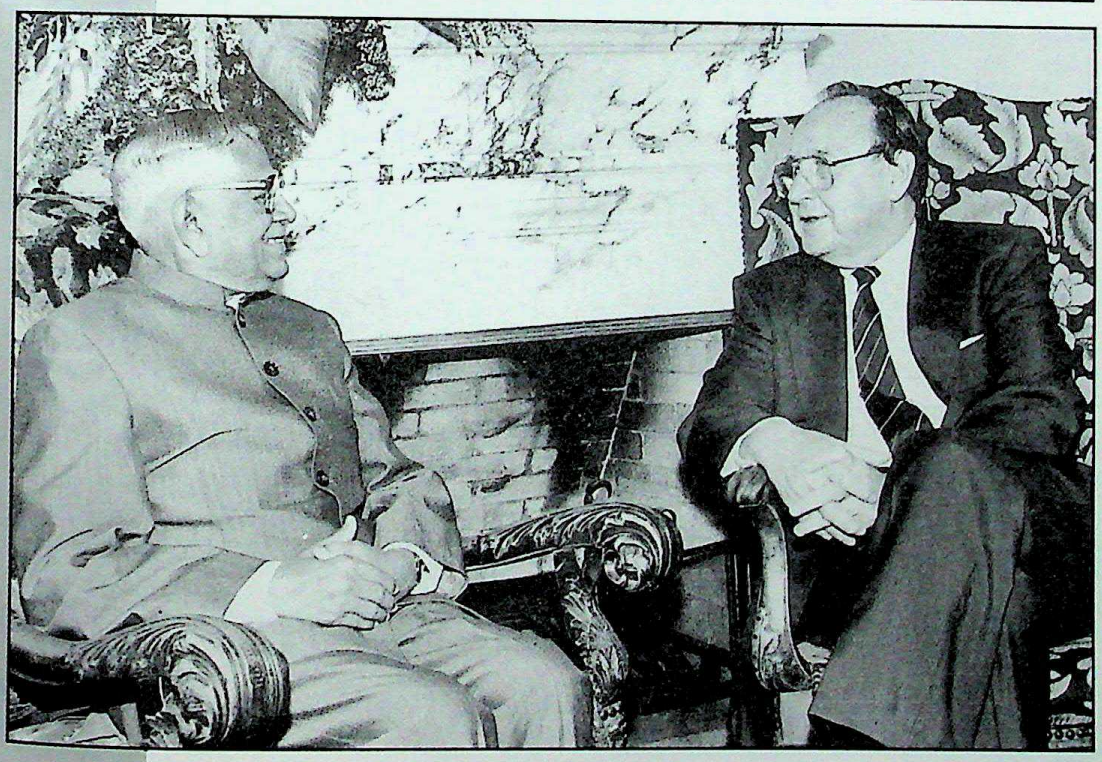


With President Weizäecker of Federal Republic of Germany
at Mughal Gardens (1.3.91).

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu



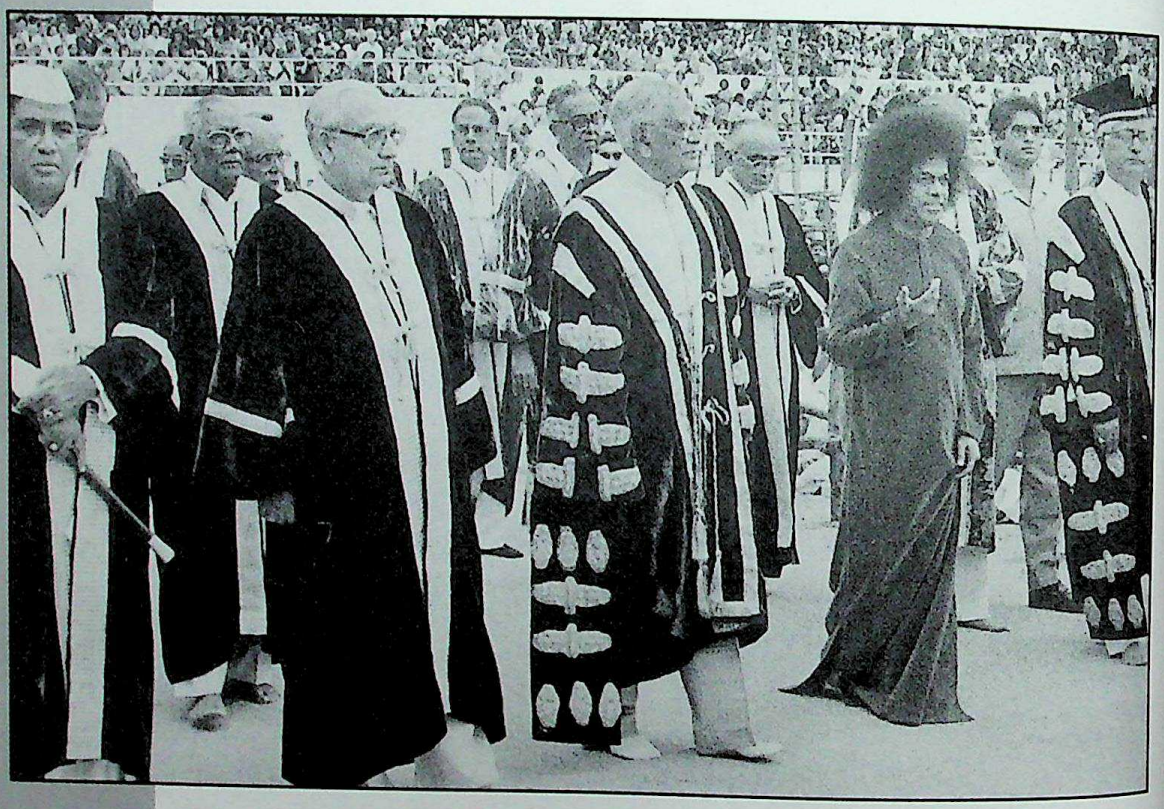


top: With Sam Najouma–President of SWAPO.

below: With Genscher of the Federal Republic of Germany (19.9.89).

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu



Convocation procession of Sai Institute of Higher Learning (22.11.90).

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

left: Celebrating Diwali with orphan children (5.11.91).

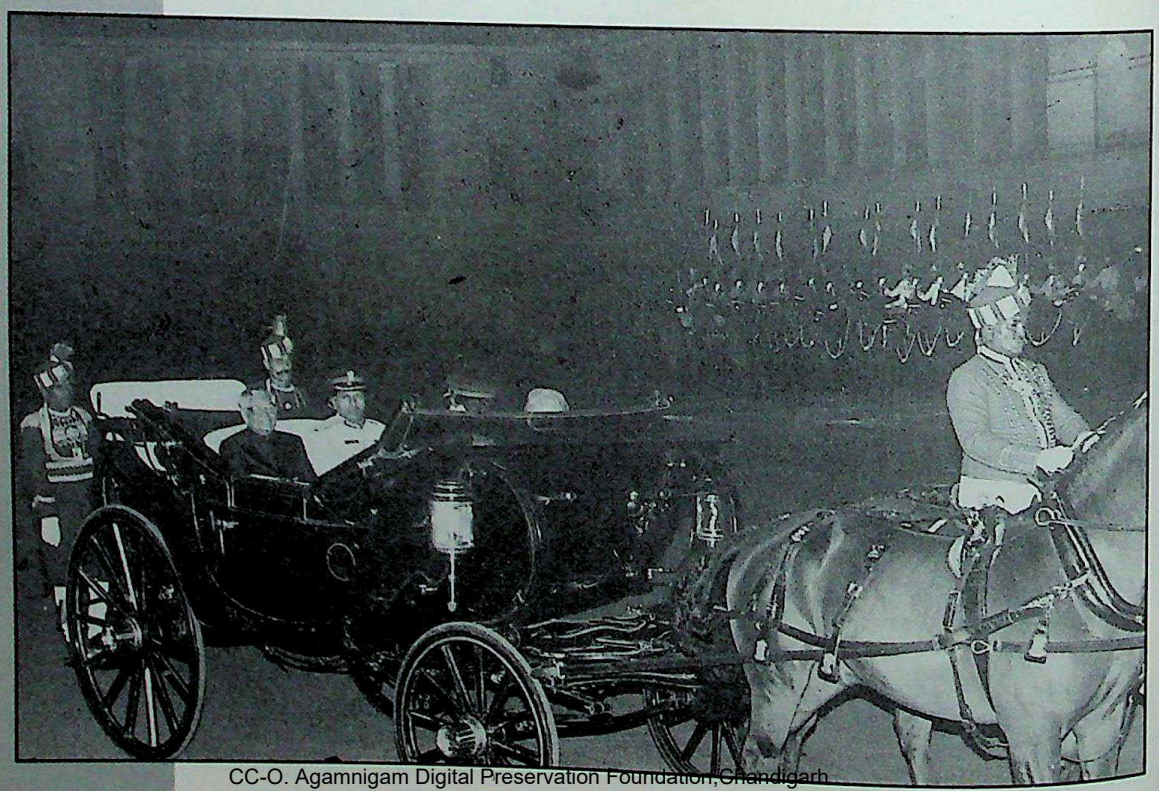
below: With school children in Himachal Pradesh.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

left: With Chinese children – Gao Jianhong and Yan Che Ngy – invited by President for the Republic Day Parade (27.1.92).

below: Presentation of Trumpet 2 Standard to President Bodyguard.



CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

1989. It is well known that a single appointment creates a dozen disappointments. On April 19, nineteen members of the Assembly wrote to Governor Venkatasubbiah that they were withdrawing their support to the Janata Dal ministry. The Governor, after getting the signatures verified by Secretary to the Legislature, came to the conclusion that the Council of Ministers headed by Bommai did not command a majority in the Assembly. On April 20, Minister Rachaiah presented to the Governor letters from seven members withdrawing their earlier communication. The Governor reached the conclusion that there was a lot of horse-trading going on in the Janata Dal and recommended imposition of President's Rule and dissolution of the Assembly under Article 356 of the Constitution.

During all this period I was on a tour of Tamil Nadu and was in Ootacamund on April 19. The Tamil Nadu Governor, Dr. P.C.Alexander, hosted a reception for me that evening and about seventy guests attended it. At the end of the reception I was told that Home Minister Buta Singh wanted to speak to me urgently on the secret phone. The secret phone however did not function — not an unusual occurrence — and we talked on the regular one.

The Home Minister gave an account of the happenings in Karnataka and of the recommendation of the Governor for imposition of President's Rule and dissolution of the Assembly. He said that horse-trading was going on and lakhs of rupees were being passed to purchase support. I told Buta Singh that the proper course for the Governor was to ask the Ministry to take a vote of confidence in the Assembly and that the drastic action of dissolution would recoil on the Central Government. But Buta Singh said that the Cabinet had met and decided to accept the advice of the Governor. I said if the Cabinet had taken a decision I would abide by it. Buta Singh then conveyed to me that the file would be sent

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

to me by a special courier for signature.

I thought that my views should be made known to the Prime Minister and so I rang up Delhi to say that I was cutting short my tour and returning by lunch time on April 20 and that the file need not be sent to me. I returned to Delhi at 2 p.m. on April 20. There was a request from opposition leaders for an appointment with me and I instructed Secretary Prem Kumar to give one at 3.30 p.m. R.K. Dhawan rang up and wanted to see me before I met the opposition leaders. Since he was now being used as a channel of communication with the Prime Minister, I readily agreed so that my views could reach the Prime Minister.

I told Dhawan that the question whether a Ministry commanded the confidence of the Assembly should be tested in the House and not by the Governor and that under the Constitution, the Ministry should command a majority of the members present in the Assembly and not a majority of its total membership. I pointed out that Indira Gandhi, after the Congress split, did not have a majority of the Lok Sabha membership but still had the support of other parties to command a majority and carried on her government till 1971.

For all these reasons I asked Dhawan to convey to the Prime Minister that no action need be taken on the Governor's recommendation till April 27 when the Karnataka Assembly would meet and decide the issue. Dhawan said I should have been consulted before and that the situation had become awkward as the Cabinet had already endorsed the Governor's recommendation. Dhawan promised to convey my views to the Prime Minister.

At 3.30 p.m. opposition leaders V.P. Singh, Devi Lal, Madhu Dandavate, Biju Patnaik, V.C.Shukla, N.T. Rama Rao and others called on me and presented a memorandum. They urged that the issue of majority for the government

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

should be tested in the Assembly and quoted the Sarkaria Commission recommendations (on Centre-State relations) in support. They also asked what I would do if a number of members of Parliament submitted a memorandum to me withdrawing support to the Prime Minister. I merely smiled. They also requested that as President I send back the recommendation for reconsideration by the Council of Ministers. I pointed out to them that I was bound by the advice of the Cabinet. The opposition leaders raised another important issue. They said that 19 members of the party who presented the memorandum to the Governor formed less than one-third of the party strength of 111 and were defectors according to the anti-defection law and the Governor should not have accepted the memorandum from them nor acted on it. I felt there was some substance in this contention and so, after the delegation left, I rang up Dhawan and asked him to convey this to the Prime Minister.

Home Minister Buta Singh called on me at 6.30 p.m. and explained that the Cabinet had accepted the Governor's recommendation and that it would embarrass the Governor if his decision was not implemented. He also said that the Cabinet had examined all aspects and taken the decision to impose President's Rule. He wanted the proclamation to be issued the same day to put an end to uncertainty and unfair practices.

I pondered over the situation. The President is not an appellate or supervisory authority over the government. The responsibility for acts of omission and commission is that of the government and the public criticism sometimes voiced against the President is based on a lack of understanding of his constitutional limitations. The formalities envisaged in Article 356 having been complied with, and the Government having stood by its decision after knowing my views, I had no option but to comply with Article 74. I signed the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

proclamation a little before 8 p.m. The Lok Sabha sitting was extended twice up to 8.30 p.m. and the Home Minister made the announcement of imposition of President's Rule in Karnataka at 8.15 p.m. amidst protests.

Before emplaning for Delhi on April 20, I inaugurated the silver jubilee celebrations of the Radio Astronomy Centre which, as a Minister in Madras years earlier, I had helped to establish at Ootacamund. I availed myself of the opportunity to sound a note of warning against stockpiling of nuclear weapons. I said, "An accident, misjudgement or irresponsible action can bring about a holocaust resulting in a nuclear winter and eradication of all species." "The concept of Star Wars was another macabre dimension to the dance of death. We should make our voices for survival of the human race heard," I added.

On May 1, I moved to Simla for a three-week sojourn at "The Retreat". During my stay I visited the Bhakra Nangal Dam and had a boat ride in the Govind Sagar Lake. I remembered that Jawaharlal used to be proud of this mighty engineering project and of the multiple benefits the dam would confer on the people of Punjab and neighbouring States. This project has been serving the people of north India ever since its inception, providing power and irrigation facilities. I also visited the beautiful hill resort of Khajiyar, popularly called the Gulmarg of Himachal Pradesh, and was fascinated by its scenic beauty. A rich cultural programme of traditional folk dances and songs was organised for me. So impressive was the show that I also joined the dancers and performed some antics to the delight of the people.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

19

An undated letter from Shanti Bhushan, former Law Minister in the Janata Government and a senior advocate of the Supreme Court, was received at Rashtrapati Bhavan on May 11, 1989, requesting sanction under the Prevention of Corruption Act for the prosecution of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi for corruption and bribery. Surprisingly, the letter quoted sections of the repealed Prevention of Corruption Act and not the current Act of 1986. It inter alia alleged that the Prime Minister was guilty of corruption in the Bofors gun deal and repeated all that had appeared in newspapers. The letter also did not contain a verification and affirmation that the facts stated were true to the petitioner's knowledge or information which he believed to be true.

I called the Attorney-General for a preliminary discussion and for his views on the following questions:

(1) Is the President the competent authority to give sanction for prosecution of the Prime Minister? Under the Prevention of Corruption Act, the power to grant sanction for the prosecution vests with the person who has the authority to terminate the appointment of the person so charged. Though the Constitution provides that the Prime Minister shall be appointed by the President and the ministers shall hold office during the pleasure of the President, the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Council of Ministers cannot be removed as long as it enjoys the confidence of the House of the People. It therefore appeared to me that the President did not have the authority to terminate the appointment of the Prime Minister. I thought a jurisdictional fact of loss of confidence of the House must be established before the President could exercise his right of withdrawal of his pleasure.

(2) Can the President act without the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers in matters relating to the sanction of prosecution of the Prime Minister and what, if any, is the effect of the observation of the Supreme Court in Antulay's case that the Governor or the President, acting under the Prevention of Corruption Act, should exercise his individual discretion and not seek the advice of the Council of Ministers?

The Attorney-General sent a draft reply and stated that he was ready to discuss the contents. He was of the opinion that based on the judgement of the Supreme Court in Karunanidhi's case, the President was the sanctioning authority for the prosecution of the Prime Minister and that, based on Antulay's case, the President should act on his own discretion and not on the advice of the Council of Ministers.

On June 21, the Home Secretary, the Law Secretary and the Attorney-General called on me for a discussion. I explained to them that Karunanidhi's case only decided that the Chief Minister was a public servant and the question whether the Governor was the authority competent to remove the Chief Minister was not raised or decided. I said that granting that the Prime Minister is a public servant, the question whether the President was competent to remove him was still open. The observation of the Supreme Court in Antulay's case that the President or the Governor acts in his

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

sole discretion and not on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers rested on the concession made by the counsel in that case and the issue was not decided on the basis of the contentions raised and argued by the parties. I said the observation of the Supreme Court that the concession was rightly made was at best an *obiter dictum*. The Attorney-General agreed to examine these issues further and send a formal reply.

The reply reiterated the position that so long as the current ruling in the Karunanidhi case held good, the President must be deemed to be the authority competent to sanction prosecution of the Prime Minister. The R.S. Naik case should be regarded as ruling that the President or the Governor should act in his discretion without the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers in matters relating to sanction of prosecution, though both these positions could be assailed in appropriate proceedings.

On the basis of this opinion, I examined Shanti Bhushan's application carefully, without referring the matter to the Home Ministry. When Rajiv Gandhi came for a routine call, I did not mention this subject nor did he advert to it. The petition relied extensively on newspaper reports and contained many quotations from them. It was full of arguments and surmises. The Bombay High Court had held that newspaper reports are hearsay and not evidence. After studying the papers carefully I came to the conclusion that there was no evidence connecting the Prime Minister with receipt or acceptance of bribes and that the allegations were just arguments based on surmise. I passed the order: "The application of Shri Shanti Bhushan for sanction of prosecution of the Prime Minister is hereby rejected."

On July 11, Shanti Bhushan wrote back stating that the order did not give reasons and he wanted to know whether the decision was taken by the President in his sole discretion

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

or on the advice of the Council of Ministers.

After consulting the Attorney-General, a reply was sent to Shanti Bhushan stating that whether any advice was tendered by the Council of Ministers or not, was confidential under Article 74 of the Constitution. Thanks to my legal background and association with the United Nations Administrative Tribunal for 25 years, I could bring to bear a measure of legal insight to the issues before me. I wondered what a President without legal training would do in such cases. If the President had to decide such issues in his sole discretion, he could hardly distinguish between evidence and hearsay, nor could he judge whether the ingredients of an offence had been made out by the applicant. If he relied on his secretary who oftentimes was an administrative officer and not one trained in law, his advice could not be of much value. If the President consulted the law officers of the Government, he could not be sure if the advice was not partisan. Nor could he consult judges since they had to decide the case later if sanction was issued. Consultations with non-official lawyers would hardly be proper since it involved sensitive charges against the head of the administration. I hope the Supreme Court will some day ponder over all these matters.

On May 22, India reached a landmark in advanced missile technology by successfully launching "Agni" at the missile testing range at Chandipur-on-sea, Orissa and became the fifth country in the world to possess an IRBM (Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile) capability, joining the exclusive club along with the United States, the Soviet Union, France and China. Defence Minister K.C. Pant, senior officials and more than four hundred scientists who had worked on this project watched with pride as the fiery ball hurtled into space. I felt proud over this achievement as the project cell was created by me as Defence Minister. I

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

commended the scientists and described the launch as "a significant milestone in India's rapid scientific advance to self-reliance."

Pondicherry is a unique place in India. Jawaharlal Nehru called it a "window to French culture". Hallowed by the presence of the great sage Sri Aurobindo and the Mother who chose Pondicherry as the place for their *sadhana*, it was Pondicherry that gave asylum to Subramania Bharathi, the national poet, from British vengeance. The proposal to start a Central University at Pondicherry got delayed on account of a serious difference of opinion over its name. Finally the Government of India decided, after over a decade, to name it as Pondicherry University.

The University was establishment in 1985, under an Act of Parliament and the noted educationist, Dr. K. Venkata-subramanian, was appointed the first Vice-Chancellor. As Vice-President, I was requested to be the first Chancellor of this nascent University. When I later became President I was given the role of Visitor to the University and Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma, the then Vice-President, became its Chancellor.

Situated on the shores of the Bay of Bengal on about 800 acres, the University has expanded rapidly with the addition of several departments including School of Management and School of Ecology.

As Visitor I was invited to deliver the First Convocation address of the University on May 25, 1989. Speaking on the occassion, I congratulated the University on its progress and said, "A degree is not the end of education because examinations cannot end the trials of life." I quoted the noted historian Arnold Toynbee who once said: "It is both absurd and unjust to classify a person, once for all, as being first class or third class when he is only twenty-two years old. There are slow-growers who blossom late in life and conversely there

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

are brilliant starters who fail to fulfil their early promise."

I called on the young graduates to face the future tests in life with confidence. In my view there was latent talent in every one and it was one's duty to discover his skill and aptitude and concentrate on perfecting it. In short, he had to discover himself and thereafter seek to discover his use to society. I gave a call to the faculty and students to "preserve and improve upon the rich tradition of the blend of Franco-Indian culture which is a unique feature of this Union Territory."

On June 1, I visited the famous cave temple of Vaishnodevi in Jammu. Though it is one of the best known temples of India, it had been very badly maintained and the large number of pilgrims had no facilities whatsoever. Governor Jagmohan took over the administration of the temple and improved it enormously. The shrine is inside a cave which can be reached by pilgrims only by crawling through a small passage. There is another passage from the rear through which people can walk to the sanctum sanctorum. We had *darshan* of the deity and spent three hours admiring the scenic beauty of the area. I also inspected a number of development schemes launched by the 'Sri Mata Vaishnodevi Shrine Board', headed by Jagmohan himself.

During my visit Jagmohan and Dr. Farooq Abdullah accompanied me and gave a lot of information about the ancient centre of pilgrimage.

From June 6 onwards, I paid a state visit to three African countries, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Tanzania. Our delegation consisted of the Minister of State for Finance, Eduardo Faleiro, who earlier as Minister of State, External Affairs, had been dealing with Africa; Secretary to the President, Prem Kumar; Secretary, External Affairs Ministry, Alfred Gonsalves; Chief of Protocol, Siddharth Singh, and the other usual staff. After a very comfortable journey by an Air India

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

special flight we arrived at Harare, capital of Zimbabwe, at 2 p.m. local time. It was early winter in Zimbabwe and a cool breeze welcomed us.

President Robert Mugabe and his wife received us at the airport. The ceremonial welcome consisted of a guard of honour, inspection of troops and a march past by men in uniform. Large portraits of Mugabe and the President of India adorned the airport building. Members of the government, officials and the Indian community welcomed us with traditional garlands. This was immediately followed by folk dances and songs, an item seldom included in airport receptions in India and other countries. There were no rigid security arrangements and Mugabe and I moved freedly among the folk dancers in a relaxed mood.

Zimbabwe is a pluralistic society with several black tribes and two hundred thousand whites living in peace and harmony. The whites still dominate the economy and control industry, banking, etc. English is the official language but local languages are also used in broadcasts.

Around 1960, the whites declared the then state of Southern Rhodesia independent and let loose an orgy of repression on the local population. The struggle for freedom which was bitter with sabotage, guerrilla activities and violence, received massive support and assistance from the neighbouring states of Tanzania and Mozambique. The Soviet Union and India backed the resistance leader Joshua Nkomo while Mugabe was helped by China during the struggle. In the election following independence, Mugabe's group ZANU won over the Nkomo faction ZAPU but Mugabe showed wisdom and statesmanship by engaging Nkomo in constructive national activities instead of suppressing the opposition group. Likewise, when the new Constitution was framed, adequate safeguards were provided to the white community and representation given to it

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

in the Cabinet.

Mugabe is a soft-spoken and pleasant person who does not hesitate to smile or express warmth of feeling. He was appreciative of the support India extended to him as Chairman of NAM. He had very warm personal feelings towards Rajiv Gandhi and moved with easy familiarity with him. For Zimbabwe he become a symbol of stability, objectivity and efficiency.

Our delegation met Mugabe and his team at the State House at 5 p.m. The Zimbabwean team included one member who had spent five years in India as a scholar under an exchange programme. The talks were very pleasant since India and Zimbabwe had total similarity of views on all global issues as members of NAM. We agreed on the urgency to dismantle apartheid, the need to ensure free and fair elections in Namibia and on the importance of the Africa Fund. We welcomed the détente between East and West and the INF Treaty and hoped that the world move progressively towards a nuclear weapon-free state.

In the next one-to-one meeting without aides, Mugabe was less critical of South Africa. He thought there was a change in the atmosphere and that internal and external pressures were mounting on South Africa compelling it to find a solution to its problems. He was not expecting an overnight change in favour of majority rule in South Africa but felt sanguine about a gradual move towards it. He said that the treatment Zimbabwe had extended to whites in safeguarding their economic and political rights should serve as an assurance to the whites under majority rule in South Africa also. Mugabe nominated one white and one Indian to represent the minorities in Parliament. This showed an optimism in total contrast to his public condemnation of South Africa and, apartheid.

Mugabe had scheduled a state banquet for me on the day

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

of my arrival. Since India was observing a three-day mourning for Iranian leader Khomeini, the banquet was postponed to the next day, June 7. I apoligised to Mugabe for the inconvenience caused but he appreciated the difficulty.

On June 7, we laid a wreath at the tombs of the heroes of Zimbabwe's liberation struggle at Hero's Acre with the usual solemnity.

Thereafter we left for the Victoria Falls. I had imagined it to be something like the Niagara Falls. But the Victoria Falls were far beyond my imagination. The volume of water, the length of the falls, the lovely gorge and the rainbow formed by the sun's rays on the spray of gushing waters were avidly devoured by me and my camera. At one spot, the spray from the falls completely drenched us despite our rubber over-coats. It is certainly the eighth wonder of the world. A statue of David Livingstone, the explorer, stands facing the falls, evidently transfixed by its sheer beauty.

After lunch at the Victoria Falls Hotel we returned to Harare. The High Commissioner had arranged a meeting with the Indian community over tea. Speaking to the gathering I said that there was great scope for small industries in Zimbabwe and asked the Indian community to graduate from being mere traders to industrialists. I said many consumer goods such as soaps, matches and pencils, were imported while they could be produced in Zimbabwe itself by cottage and small-scale industries with very low capital investment. I asked the Indian community to become useful members of their country of adoption, adding to its wealth by engaging themselves in the production of commodities and services and by providing employment to the local population.

A banquet was held in the State House attended by a glittering array of guests. After soup was served, Mugabe reached the lectern by the side of the main table and made his

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

welcome speech. He applauded India's role in the Non-Aligned Movement and commended the NAM for focusing attention on and helping to resolve several conflicts around the world. The Africa Fund under India's chairmanship was in his opinion, a major and most successful NAM initiative. Mugabe said that for condemning apartheid and supporting Namibian independence they had incurred the wrath of South Africa. He urged the international community to be vigilant against South African moves in Namibia.

Mugabe thanked India profusely for the opportunities and scholarships provided to the people of Zimbabwe to acquire skills and knowledge and said that such cooperation had helped Zimbabwe to improve the life of its people. He then proposed a toast to the President and members of the delegation of India.

In my reply I recalled that Mahatma Gandhi had forged his tool of resistance to colonial oppression and racial discrimination on South African soil and that the tool had been successfully employed in India to win independence. Urging the influential countries to impose sanctions on South Africa, I said: "Only comprehensive mandatory sanctions by South Africa's main trading partners are capable of bringing the regime to its senses." Since South Africa had been encouraged in its discriminatory policies by the unwillingness of other countries to apply sanctions, the liberation movements in South Africa had been forced to become violent. I went on to warn that "unless the Pretoria regime ensures freedom and human rights for all South Africians through dialogue, there would be violence on an unprecedented scale." I offered the assistance of Indian experts in science, technology, industry and management to the Government and people of Zimbabwe and hoped that the two countries would have multidirectional growth in the years ahead.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

As soon as I proposed the toast to the President of Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe's national anthem was played and we settled down for dinner. During the dinner Mugabe talked about the pressures on South Africa and the change in the global atmosphere and the chances of a solution to the South African problem becoming bright. This was in contrast to his harsh speech against South Africa earlier. On the morning of June 8 there was a repeat of the ceremonies witnessed on our arrival with a guard of honour and folk dances. President and Madame Mugabe gave us an affectionate farewell. Our next destination was Zambia.

We arrived at Lusaka, the capital, in less than an hour. President Kenneth Kaunda, who had been on tour of Canada and West Indies and had returned only an hour earlier, was at the airport to receive us. I had met Kaunda several times and knew him closely. He is a vegetarian, a teetotaller and drinks not even coffee or tea — a true Gandhian. Once when I went to Botswana for the 20th anniversary of its independence, I was asked what kind of food I would like to have. I requested them to serve me the same food they served to Kaunda. When I repeated this to him he was greatly pleased and wanted me to tell it to the Secretary-General of his party.

Zambia has a single-party democracy and Kaunda has been in office for 25 years. His popularity was evident when while celebrating the silver jubilee of his Presidentship, he was greeted with loud cheers of "One nation, one Zambia, one leader, Dr. Kaunda."

Kaunda has been a champion of all African causes and had supported every move of the African countries for liberation. An inveterate opponent of apartheid, he had not missed a single opportunity to condemn it. Even though he had himself been a victim of the maltreatment of blacks, he bears no bitterness against whites personally. I was told that when as a young man he went to buy meat, a rejected piece

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

was insultingly thrown at him. Since then he gave up meat.

As I alighted from the plane Kaunda warmly embraced me as an old friend and beamed with pleasure. After the usual formalities there followed the introductions and a 45-minute cultural programme of vigorous folk dances and music. The Indian community received us warmly and the children waved Zambian and Indian national flags.

We stayed in the State House in the midst of spacious lawns and woods. Security was rather tight and when my granddaughter sauntered into the lawns, she was stopped more than once by the guards even though a member of the State House staff was chaperoning her.

In the afternoon we visited Chilenje House where Kaunda lived during the struggle for independence, the cemetery of the heroes of the freedom movement and saw brief records of their lives. Thereafter we proceeded to the freedom statue where I laid a wreath in an appropriate ceremony.

At 5 p.m. I called on Kaunda for talks without aides on either side. It was during this talk that Kaunda showed a certain measure of flexibility in his approach to South Africa. He sensed a change in the attitude of South Africa and saw prospects of understanding with the new President, de Klerk. He also saw some change in the attitude of the United States which he had visited only a few days earlier. He thought that external pressures were also being brought on South Africa to find a solution. (These views were diametrically opposed to the hell and fury he often let loose in his public utterances.) He also saw hopeful signs of Namibian freedom and of the success of SWAPO in the forthcoming elections there. I expressed apprehension that the elections in Namibia might not be free or fair as South Africa was in charge of the administration and eletions. Kaunda, while conceding the possibility of abuse by South

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Africa, felt that the United Nations and world opinion should ensure proper elections in that country.

The impression that this têté-à-têté left in my mind was that India was taking a more aggressive line against South Africa than the African leaders themselves.

The official level talks between the two delegations followed the familiar pattern. Kaunda praised Rajiv Gandhi's leadership of the NAM and his gallant efforts for nuclear disarmament. He was appreciative of India's efforts to strengthen the frontline states through the Africa Fund. He wanted the problem of Third World countries relating to low commodity prices and debt burden to be taken up by NAM.

Apart from our concern about the civil war conditions in Afghanistan caused by the disregard of the Geneva Agreement, and global issues relating to nuclear disarmament, I pointed out India's adverse balance of trade with Zambia and sought measures for rectifying this. I also stressed the wide and vast opportunities for mutual cooperation in industrial and technological fields between Zambia and India and wanted Zambia to explore these possibilities with Indian business groups.

At 7.45 p.m. Oliver Tambo, President of the African National Congress in exile, called on me. He too was optimistic of a solution to the South African struggle. He believed that internal and external pressures on South Africa would compel it to release Nelson Mandela and once Mandela was free, the pressure for majority rule would gain momentum. He was positive that South Africa would not be able to arrest Mandela again and that the struggle was bound to succeed. Tambo was confident that SWAPO would win the polls in Namibia. He allaved my apprehension about fair elections in Namibia and felt that the U.N. and world opinion would safeguard against electoral manipulations.

On June 9, we visited the copper belt of Zambia. Out of

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

about 15,000 Indians in Zambia, 7,000 live in Ndola in the Nehanga Copper Mines area. The Indian community is prosperous and has built a Hindu Hall which it has thrown open to all communities. At a grand reception in the Hindu Hall attended by the elite of the area, I congratulated the Indian community for providing social services to the people in the area and for preserving the Indian culture. Thereafter we went to the copper mines where I gave a talk to the executives and industrialists on the role of small and medium scale industries in economic development.

The Nehanga Copper Mines is a gigantic venture, with both open-cast and underground mining operations. The open-cast mine is ten miles in length and three miles in width. It is a pity that the entire copper produced is sold as ore and not processed within the country. Zambia's fortune varies with the international price of copper over which it has no control.

Kaunda hosted a grand banquet for the Indian delegation at the Intercontinental Hotel owned by the government. In his welcome speech he made the significant statement that he was willing to take part in honest dialogue with South Africa if:

i) the state of emergency was lifted;
ii) the ban on the ANC was removed;
iii) all political prisoners including Nelson Mandela were released;
iv) Oliver Tambo and other exiles were allowed to return; and
v) the gag on the Press was lifted.

He said that India had been a reliable friend both during the freedom struggle and afterwards. He handsomely acknowledged India's assistance to frontline states in Africa and

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

to Zambia in particular.

In my reply to the toast I emphasised the age-old ties between Africa and India and said that we were linked by geography as well as history. It is said that in prehistoric times Africa and India constituted a single landmass and that the Indian Ocean had washed the shores of both the countries for millennia. I also pointed out that it was in Africa that Mahatma Gandhi forged the epoch-making political instrument of civil disobedience and non-violent non-cooperation and it was with this weapon called 'Satyagraha' that he fought the British and brought freedom to India. I asserted the necessity of removing apartheid and welcomed the evolving situation of détente between the two superpowers and expressed the hope that this new climate would help to expedite elimination of nuclear weapons from the face of the earth. On June 10, we left Lusaka for Dar-es-Salaam, after a colourful ceremonial farewell.

At 12.40 local time, we arrived at Dar-es-Salaam, capital of Tanzania. Tanzania has been formed by the merger of Tanganyika and Zanzibar. Large-scale Indian migration took place after Tanganyika, which belonged to Germany before the First World War, became a Trust territory under British mandate. There are about 55,000 people of Indian origin in Tanzania, largely engaged in trading activities. President Julius Nyerere, who held office for more than 20 years and led the country admirably, voluntarily stepped down, and President Mwinyi is now in charge. We were received warmly by Mwinyi and his wife. There were the same ceremonial parade and folk dances as in Lusaka. The Indian community was there in strength happily waving the tricolour. The ten-mile route to State House was lined on both sides with men and women cheering the "Ras" (Indian President) and Mwinyi. For the first time after 1984 when I became Vice-President, I rode in an open car waving to

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

people on both sides.

After lunch I made a private call on Mwinyi without aides. Mwinyi is a soft-spoken, gentle person without the flamboyant personality of Kaunda or the fatherly image of Nyerere whom I know very closely. He was very well informed and appeared to be competent and popular. Like other African leaders he was less critical of South Africa and was hopeful of a decisive advance in the solution of the problem. Even on Namibia he was more hopeful of a solution following elections and did not share our apprehensions about a free and fair poll.

I gave expression to some of our doubts regarding a solution to Namibia. Since the South African administration was in control of the electoral process, I felt it might try to establish a puppet regime in Namibia which would be worse than the existing situation. I also pointed out that though amnesty had been declared for the exiles, political prisoners within Namibia had not been released nor the discriminatory laws repealed. I also referred to the paucity of funds which hampered SWAPO from running a major election campaign. Mwinyi admitted the existence of these difficulties but expected SWAPO to win despite handicaps. These talks were followed by official discussions between the two delegations. We discussed the growing bilateral relations between India and Tanzania and the prospects of further expansion. Mwinyi was appreciative of the facilities offered by India for studies in medicine, engineering and science and technology to students of Tanzania and wanted more seats to be allotted to them. He also requested assistance for establishment of mini cement plants, sugar mills and small industrial projects.

After talks I met the heads of missions and international organisations — a programme which only Tanzania had arranged. During my earlier visits to the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia, similar meetings with heads of missions

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

had been arranged by those states.

The state banquet was held the same evening in the State House. The main part of the State House was built by the Germans before the First World War as Tanganyika was their colony. When Princess Margaret visited Tanganyika, a separate wing was added to the State House which now serves as the guest wing. After independence, a symmetrical wing was added by the Government of Tanzania. Hence the building is at slightly different levels.

Mwinyi in his welcome speech praised India for its great achievements in diverse fields. and adverted to the need for greater South-South cooperation for establishing a new international economic order. Condemning South Africa for its repressive policies, the President called for immediate recognition of the principle of self-determination and human rights. He concluded by stressing India's role in the struggle for freedom and justice in South Africa and also in the economic development of the African nations.

In my reply I lavished praise on its scenic beauty and complimented Tanzania for its role in securing the independence of Zimbabwe and assisting Uganda and Mozambique in their hour of need. I also paid glowing tributes to their legendary leader Nyerere for his invaluable contribution to the countries in Africa. The wanton repression of the majority population by the South African army and police, the continuing incarceration of political leaders including the redoubtable Nelson Mandela and the obdurate denial of basic rights came for my strongest criticism. I concluded by recalling that Tanzania and India were members of the 'Six Nation Five-Continent Initiative' for nuclear disarmament.

On June 11, we left for the famous Serengeti Wildlife Park. At Kilimanjaro International Airport we changed to an old-fashioned military aircraft with bucket seats and noisy

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

propellers. The pilot obliged us by flying one full circle round Mount Kilimanjaro. It was a thrilling sight and resembled the solitary grandeur of Kanchenjunga in the Himalayas.

In the afternoon we drove in a closed jeep to see the wildlife. Herds of zebras, lovely impalas in shining red hue and bewitching eyes, wildebeest with faces like bulls, manes like lions and backs like horses greeted us all along the route. We did not see in full the majestic lions in their natural habitat and decided to return the next morning to see them. The forest guards warned us that it would be dangerous to stay in the forest after dusk and hurried us back to the hotel.

At daybreak we were lucky to see five lions moving about freely in the thickets and shrubs. One majestic male lion was moving in full sight at a distance of about six metres from us. We were warned against making any noise as the animals could panic and attack our vehicles.

We returned to Dar-es-Salaam for lunch and made a farewell call on Mwinyi.

Mwinyi had a bereavement in the family and so the ceremonial farewell was cancelled. We took leave of him at the State House. The Prime Minister and other dignitaries saw us off at the airport.

At the conclusion of the tour I sent a report to the Prime Minister drawing his attention to harsh criticism of South Africa by the frontline states in public but their soft mood of cautious optimism in private and added that whether based on a cold assessment of the situation on the ground or on mere wishful thinking of weary leaders, it may be necessary to fine-tune our approach and utterances.

The Prime Minister felt that the Soviet–American entente and the cautious optimism of de Klerk were factors which could have contributed towards some rethinking. He wrote back: "I fully share your view that it is necessary for us to carefully monitor the development and to fine-tune our

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

approach and our statements in the light of evolving assessments." The Prime Minister also took note of the request for a larger intake of students from Africa in professional institutions and for setting up of sugar mills, etc., from specified countries. He specially noted the confidences which the African leaders shared with me during the talks without aides.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

20

During the budget session of Parliament I advised Buta Singh, Home Minister, Sheila Dixit, Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, and Rajiv Gandhi to place the Comptroller and Auditor General's report on Bofors on the table of the Houses of Parliament. I also told the Prime Minister that he could skip the monsoon session and go straight for general elections around October/November instead of waiting for expiry of the term of the current Lok Sabha. Apparently, Rajiv had better advisers and the CAG report was not tabled before the House adjourned.

The CAG is a constitutional authority of eminence and importance. It is his duty to audit all expenses of the Consolidated Fund of India and also ascertain whether the money shown was legally utilised. It is obligatory on his part to see that the expenditure was incurred observing economy, efficiency and wisdom. As Vice-President I had contributed an article on the role of CAG to the Constitution of India edited by Justice Hidayatullah wherein I had quoted Dr. Ambedkar's views on the role of the Auditor General.

The CAG report on the Bofors Howitzer deal had indicted the Government on procedural lapses and failures and also found that commission agents were employed and paid. There was a hue and cry in both Houses of Parliament and the Opposition demanded the resignation of the Prime Minister. The usual procedure in respect of CAG reports is that on presentation to the House, they stand automatically

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

referred to the Public Accounts Committee. After scrutiny and report by the PAC, action is initiated by the Government in accordance with its recommendations. The reports are not discussed in the House but members can freely refer to the shortcomings in administration pointed out by the CAG.

So when the Opposition insisted and the Government conceded a debate on the CAG report on the Bofors gun deal, both failed to follow the correct procedure. Worse still was the blistering attack by the Treasury benches on the CAG, calling him names undignified for use in Parliament. The Opposition totally obstructed the proceedings of the Lok Sabha during the whole week from July 18 to 21. Then followed the dramatic resignation of 106 members of the Lok Sabha which involved loss of pension and remuneration for some new members for the rest of the term. Yet they sacrificed these to lodge their protest.

The Congress members who met me were impervious to the situation and even thought it was a blessing. Not being familiar with the history of the freedom movement, where a person who resigned from the legislature at the call of the Congress immediately became a hero, they did not realise these 'heroes' would surely be returned again to Parliament.

Rajiv Gandhi had an hour-long discussion with me on July 22. He said that he went out of the way to agree to a debate on the CAG report, though he knew it was not the practice. He was prepared to meet every criticism in a calm debate. The Opposition had planned a strategy of disruption to gain political and electoral advantage. He spoke with confidence that he would be able to meet the challenge in a general election and even discussed some possible dates for elections. I told Rajiv Gandhi that the attack on the CAG by Treasury benches was unfortunate and that the government should have protected the dignity of the high office in the interest of a healthy democracy. Rajiv too was not happy

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

with the language some members of his party had used, but in the turmoil that prevailed in both the Houses, he said he could do precious little. Contrary to media speculation, Rajiv Gandhi did not mention dissolving the Lok Sabha, nor did I advert to it.

Premadasa, who had succeeded Jayewardene as President of Sri Lanka, has been a critic of the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement and the posting of the Indian Peace Keeping Force in Sri Lanka. On June 1, 1989, while addressing a religious gathering in a Buddhist temple near Colombo, he gave an ultimatum to India to withdraw the IPKF from Sri Lanka by July 29, 1989, and followed it up with a letter to the Prime Minister of India. Rajiv Gandhi was deeply hurt by the unilateral action of one of the parties to the agreement and the unrealistic time schedule fixed. However, in his reply, after setting out the legal basis of the role of the IPKF and the obligations of both parties under the agreement, Rajiv Gandhi indicated that he was prepared to discuss the time, modality and other details for the withdrawal of the IPKF.

When Rajiv Gandhi spoke to me about it, I suggested that as India was losing precious lives and money on the IPKF operations, we should seize the opportunity to pull out our troops for good and wash our hands of this venture. I also suggested that he should work out the logistics of withdrawal with the Army Chief.

Challenging the proclamation of President's Rule in Karnataka, the erstwhile Chief Minister, S.R. Bommai, moved the Karnataka High Court for redress. The High Court, while dismissing the writ petition, ruled that recourse to a floor test of the government's strength in the Assembly was neither compulsory nor obligatory on the part of the Governor under the Constitution or other law. The High Court said, "Likewise, we were not shown nor were we able to find any provision in the Constitution or elsewhere which

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

makes it obligatory or compulsory for the Governor to test the veracity of support to the ruling party by having recourse to the floor test...." This opinion ran counter to the advice I gave to the government on the Karnataka case and therefore I felt I should explain the rationale of my view.

The Constitution does not require the Council of Ministers to have an absolute majority of the total membership of the House. It requires that the Council of Ministers "shall be collectively responsible to the Legislative Assembly of the State." Therefore, even if the Council of Ministers does not have a majority of the membership of the House, it can continue to function as long as it has the majority of members present and voting in the House. There have been several instances both in India and abroad where the Council of Ministers did not have a majority of the total membership of the House and yet continued in office since it enjoyed a majority of those present. Whether the Council of Ministers enjoys the majority in the House cannot be tested by counting heads on the lawns of Raj Bhawan but only by a floor test. Apparently this aspect had not been presented to the Karnataka High Court.

On August 14, 1989, I delivered my Independence Day address to the nation. After paying tributes to the satyagrahis who enabled India to achieve Independence, I touched on the most important subject, namely, elections. I said that our principal and most spectacular achievement had been regular, systematic and orderly elections which are the very foundations of democratic governance. I pointed out that very few countries which achieved independence after the Second World War could match India in the vibrant parliamentary form of government which it has. In the eighth general elections to Parliament and in the innumerable other elections to the State legislatures, the Indian voter had shown himself to be mature and decisive. "Indeed all Indians, rural

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

or urban, rich or poor, educated or illiterate become 'We the people' on election day, that supreme collective entity which our Constitution speaks of." I took this opportunity to appeal to the candidates in the forthcoming electons to abjure acrimony and rancour and to give no quarter to violence. "Let the elections be fought with dignity, decorum and decency." I added. I also condemned the vicious practice of voter intimidation and booth capturing. Expressing the hope that the next round of elections would be free and fair I called on the officers on election duty to discharge their responsibility with impartiality and objectivity.

It was Dr. Rajendra Prasad who started the practice of a sojourn in Hyderabad to give an opportunity to the people in the South to meet him. This practice fell into disuse after him. The old Residency building in Bolaram, Hyderabad, which is maintained by the Rashtrapati Bhavan Estate, was falling into disrepair. I revived the practice and was pleased to find it had the approval of the people. A large number of visitors came every day to have *darshan* of the President.

During my stay in Hyderabad I visited the Golconda Fort and saw the historic monuments. I was struck by the famous sound transmission system from the ramparts to the massive entrance to the fort. It was a marvel of engineering. The Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, N.T. Rama Rao, the Andhra Pradesh Congress President, Dr. M. Chenna Reddy, and other dignitaries called on me and thanked me for reviving the system of presidential sojourn in the south.

On August 31, I inaugurated the M.G.R. Medical University in Madras. When the suggestion that the university should be named after him was put to M.G. Ramachandran, then Chief Minister, he stoutly opposed it and it was only following pressure by his colleagues that he relented. Making a reference to the shortage of paramedical personnel, I pointed out that 13,000 medical graduates were produced

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

every year but there were facilities for training only 8,000 nurses when the need was four to five times that number. Medicine, I explained, was no longer confined to doctors and nurses but required inputs from a wide range of skills and disciplines such as engineers, chemists, physicists and hence an integrated development of health sciences was necessary to cope with the needs of diagnosis and treatment. Chief Minister Karunanidhi also spoke on the occasion.

On September 2, I inaugurated the centenary celebrations of the Madras Advocates Association of which I had been an active member before entering Parliament. I was elected a member of the executive committee of the association under the reserved quota for juniors when I had only three years' practice at the Bar. Later I was elected librarian also. I knew a large number of the advocates personally though I had ceased to practise from 1952.

Speaking on the occasion I said that my early legal training had stood me in good stead in my career. I did not become a victim of accepting the first representation without hearing the other side. The habit of studying the files intently instead of glancing at them superficially was a habit gained by practice at the Bar. Dealing with the mounting arrears in courts, I cautioned against liberal exercise of the writ jurisdiction when alternative remedies were available so that the highest courts may not be choked with work. I appealed to the Bar to cooperate in reducing the length of hearing of cases and help quicker administration of justice. The Madras Advocates Association was happy that one of its active members had reached the highest office in the realm and enthusiastically cheered me.

The Regional Engineering College at Tiruchi was started during my tenure as Minister in charge of Industry and Technical Education in Tamil Nadu and I was the first Chairman of the Board of Governors of the college. During

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

the 25 years of its existence, the institution had built up a high reputation for excellence. It was, therefore, a matter of personal pleasure to participate in its silver jubilee celebrations.

During my visit to Japan to attend the funeral ceremonies of the Emperor Hirohito, the President of the Federal Republic of Germany had called on me and extended an invitation to make a state visit to his country. Ever since our recognition of the German Democratic Republic (East Germany), our relations with West Germany had been conventional but not very cordial and no Indian President had visited that country for all these 40 years. The Government of India welcomed the invitation and planned my visit in mid-September. The German Federal Government insisted that the visit should be for not less than a week and that the itinerary should include visits to a number of *Lander* (States), particularly where other political parties were in power.

After the ceremonial send-off in Delhi we arrived at Koln (Cologne) Airport at 4.10 p.m. local time. Our delegation consisted of Madhavrao Scindia, Minister-in-waiting, Secretary to the President, Secretary, External Affairs, and other senior officials. There was no ceremony at the Koln Airport, but we were officially welcomed by the chief of protocol and taken by helicopter to Schloss Gynmich (Gynmich Castle). This castle originally belonged to one of the dukes of Germany. It has a moat surrounding it and a drawbridge for entry. I was reminded of Sir Walter Scott's novels.

I was told that I would be the last state guest to stay there as the castle had been purchased by a Japanese and the German government was building a modern guest house nearer Bonn as the present one was about 50 km from the capital.

On September 18, our delegation arrived at Villa Ham-

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

merschmidt, the official residence of President Richard von Wiezsäcker. I was accorded a ceremonial reception with guard of honour by a mixed contingent of the West German armed forces. Chancellor Helmut Kohl was in hospital but other ministers and dignitaries were present. Dr. Wiezsäcker, tall and elegant, and his wife Marianne, simple and unostentatious, received us with charming friendliness and moved with us with easy familiarity. There was no rigid protocol or officiousness in the whole ceremony. It reminded me of the total informality with which the Finnish President Koivisto and his wife received us during our visit to that country.

After the ceremony there were official talks between our two delegations. I complimented Germany on its spectacular recovery after the Second World War and said it proved the grit and determination of the German people. I explained the rapid progress that our economy had made in the last forty years. The President appreciated our success in achieving food self sufficiency and our impressive strides in science and technology. When I said that the regime of controls and regulations necessitated by post-war shortages was yielding place to economic liberalisation and a march towards a complete market economy, the President expressed his hope that these trends would be strengthened and accelerated.

I had been told that there was some misapprehension in European capitals regarding reduction of entry points of trade to Nepal by India and so I drew attention to our case. I clarified that the Indo-Nepal Treaty of Friendship had provided Nepalese equal rights with Indian citizens for carrying on business, owning property and for entering government service in India. It was for Nepal to choose whether to continue these special arrangements or to be governed by normal relations under international law. I pointed out that India had provided 16 entry points to Nepal

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

as against the international obligation to provide only two for landlocked countries. I added that the Prime Minister had extensive discussions with the King of Nepal and hoped there would be some solution.

Explaining Indo-Pak relations, I warmly supported the return of democracy in Pakistan, and had conveyed our desire to extend wholehearted cooperation to the new Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto. At the same time I drew attention to the induction of massive sophisticated American arms into Pakistan and the threat it posed to India. President Wiezsäcker appreciated our attitude to Bhutto and our optimism regarding improvement of Indo-Pakistan relations. Regarding arms supply to Pakistan from the United States, the President made a significant observation: "In the past their attitude toward India and Pakistan was coloured by British influence." I also talked about the crisis in Sri Lanka and our efforts to maintain the unity and integrity of the strife-torn country.

The President was appreciative of our role in Sri Lanka and Maldives for safeguarding the democratically elected government against the onslaught by mercenaries. Wiezsäcker referred to the encouraging trends in East-West relationship and warmly praised Soviet President Gorbachev for his bold initiative both in the area of economic reforms and on the INF Treaty. He saw hopeful signs of further progress in both the spheres. He welcomed the large-scale influx of people from the GDR and hoped that the dream of German unity would soon be realised. He noted the wind of liberalisation sweeping over East Europe and expected it to overtake the GDR also. He allayed fears that the single European Market might become a trade bloc by 1992 and restrict access to Third World countries and expressed confidence that the proposed wider market would enhance trade opportunities for developing countries.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

We were so engrossed in our conversation that we had exceeded the time allotted and the Chief of Protocol had to remind me of the next engagement.

We drove to the *Rathaus*, the City Council, where the Mayor of Bonn welcomed me and requested me to sign the Golden Book. I was told that I was the 285th Head of State/Government to sign the book since 1969 when reorganisation of Bonn took place and that it had been signed only by Jawaharlal Nehru from India earlier. Thereafter we walked round the marketplace as was the custom and acknowledged the cheers of and shook hands with the people.

Generally during state visits there is only a state banquet in honour of the visiting dignitary where speeches are made and toasts proposed. Wiezsäcker, however, suggested an informal family lunch at his residence for just the four of us — the two Presidents and their spouses, — and I was touched by his warmth. Madame Marianne plied me with a lot of questions about women in India, care of children and social welfare activities by non-governmental organisations.

Weizsäcker was interested in the general elections due shortly. He complimented India as a vibrant democracy and a nation that stood for human rights. He expressed disappointment at the way China had suppressed the students' agitation for political reforms and the massacre at Tiananmen Square. He said that West Germany was disillusioned about China as neither economic liberalisation nor political reforms had taken place in that country despite loud professions for over a decade. In the course of the two-hour lunch we established such a good rapport that it looked as if we had been friends for decades.

In the afternoon leaders of political parties, namely, the Deputy Chairman of the Social Democratic Party, the Chairman of the Free Democratic Party, the Minister for Cooperation and the Minister for Economy, called on me.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

They were all keen to increase trade with India and wanted more liberal imports. I pointed out to them that India had a huge adverse balance of trade with Germany and if Germany increased its imports from India, it would be possible to increase the two-way trade.

There was a grand banquet that night. The invitees filed past shaking hands with the two Presidents and their spouses for nearly half an hour. In India, the invitees stand in a row and the visiting dignitary accompanied by the host moves on shaking hands with each of them. I found the continental practice very sensible as it enabled the other guests to know who was being introduced.

In his welcome speech, Weizsäcker expressed pleasure at the first visit of a head of state from India and his confidence that relations between the two countries would be further strengthened. It was in the interest of India and the European Community as well as the world as a whole that these two sides should come closer together, he said. He pointed out that India and the European Community had no power policy interests in the area of each other and they were not rivals. The German President dealt with the change in the international climate and expressed the hope that the process of political and economic liberalisation would gather momentum and sweep over the whole of Europe.

In my reply I drew attention to a happy coincidence: both Bonn and Delhi were over 2000 years old and alluded to the close historical and cultural links. Expressing appreciation for the economic aid rendered by Germany I pointed out that Rourkela, Ramagundam and Neyveli bore testimony to the contribution Germany had made for Indias industrial development. I explained our view that peace could not be achieved by nuclear disarmament alone and that international security should go beyond arms reduction to elimination of the more fundamental pains — hunger,

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

disease, illiteracy, poverty and exploitation. I called for West German support for the Paris initiative by Egypt, Senegal, Venezuela and India for a dialogue on economic and environmental issues with the industrialised countries. The rest of my speech referred to our familiar stand on nuclear disarmament, the Palestinian issue, the Afghan situation and relations with our neighbours.

On September 19, the Foreign Minister and acting Chancellor Genscher met me. It may be recalled that Genscher was from East Germany and was a strong advocate of the unification of FRG and GDR. He felt that though popular sentiment was in favour of unification, the totally contradictory economic systems prevailing in the two Germanys could pose severe problems and impediments. A votary of market economy, he found it difficult to reconcile himself to the totalitarian form of production and distribution.

In the evening I addressed the prestigious Institute for 'Ausland Politik', the German Society for Foreign Affairs and the Federation of German Industry. The Society consists of eminent people in various walks of life and has considerable influence over public opinion on national and international issues. Many illustrious world leaders including Jawaharlal Nehru have had the privilege of addressing this Society. I felt honoured when I was invited to do so.

I chose as my theme, "Economic Development of India in Retrospect and Prospect". I traced the growth of India during the colonial era from the beginning of the century to independence in 1947 when the Indian economy was characterised by marginal growth, low national income, obsolete techniques and a recurrence of famines. India's freedom struggle had, as its goal, the establishment of a democratic state, an egalitarian society and a self-reliant economy. Since India had missed the Industrial Revolution, it had to tele-

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

scope two centuries of progress into two decades and therefore went in for massive planned development through Five Year Plans. The non-feasibility of laissez faire, the compulsions of a vast population, the low rate of savings, inadequacy of entrepreneurship and the need to ensure equitable distribution of wealth made it necessary for the state to play a crucial role. As a result, by the time of the Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85) India had achieved self-sufficiency in food. Gradually, it launched on a programme of rapid liberalisation of the economy and dismantled progressively many controls and restrictions. The rate of growth of the economy rose from an average of 3.5 percent to 5 percent and above.

Addressing myself to the problems ahead, I emphasised that population growth was posing the greatest challenge to improvement in the standard of living of the people. I concluded by appealing to Germany to correct the imbalance in its trade with India and to expand its investment programmes in India.

In the question-and-answer session after the speech, one member asked why India was lagging behind China in population control. I replied cryptically, "We are a democracy". Coming in the wake of Tiananmen Square events, it had a telling effect.

Talking to the Press, Weizsäcker expressed his happiness with the first state visit by an Indian head of state to West Germany. Some newspapers criticised me for not making any mention in my banquet speech, of "the German question" and of the thousands of refugees who were pouring into the country from East Germany. The spokesman of the German Government observed it was not customary for visiting heads of state to comment on and take positions on controversial current political issues.

From Bonn we went to Hamburg and the same evening we arrived at the beautiful city of Lu Beck, the capital of the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

State of Schleswig-Holstein. It has an ancient history and was a member of the Hanseatic League of Cities that conducted trade with many countries. Among the precious monuments that we visited in the city, we were particularly pleased to see the birthplace of the great thinker and writer Thomas Mann. From Lu Beck we flew by helicopter to Hamburg by night.

On September 21, we went to Frankfurt which is a very familiar city for me. During most of my visits to New York in connection with the United Nations Tribunal work I used to break journey at Frankfurt to avoid jet lag. I knew more of Frankfurt than even Delhi. It brought nostalgic memories of the days when I used to stroll along Wilhelm Strasse, eat in the restaurants and watch movies.

The Minister-President of Hessen hosted a lunch for us at Weisbaden, the capital of the state. The same evening we arrived in Munich, the capital of Bavaria. Bavaria is one of the largest and most dynamic states in the FRG. It has become a leader in 'high tech' and many world famous firms are located there. A number of these have collaboration with India I was told. The art and architectural treasures of Bavaria are also well-known. The Minister-President of Bavaria hosted a dinner for us and the usual toasts were proposed and speeches made.

On September 22, a programme for travel by a superfast train, which they claimed would run at 200 km an hour, was arranged. Madhavrao Scindia, Minister for Railways, who was the Minister-in-Waiting for me, showed keen interest in railway development and plied the railway officials with questions.

It was only after a visit to the FRG that I realised how strong and conscious were the *Lander* (states) of their rights. The federal power in Germany is limited and the states have a great measure of autonomy and freedom. Perhaps a comprehensive study of the relations between the Lander

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

and the Federal government may be useful for our country in dealing with Centre-State relations.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

21

Leaving Munich after dinner we arrived in Seychelles on the morning of September 23. At the La Rue Airport decorated with flags and festoons we were greeted by President Albert Rene, his Cabinet colleagues, diplomats and some Indian organisations. There was no military parade but a contingent of Young Pioneers welcomed us. In the capital town of Victoria we placed a wreath at the Liberation Monument.

Seychelles is a group of beautiful islands endowed with verdant forests and lush foliage. Its lovely beaches and moderate climate attract tourists round the year. In fact the biggest source of income for the country is tourism. With a sparse population and the ecology preserved in its pristine purity, Seychelles may be described as an Eden on earth. President Rene is a very simple and friendly person and even at the banquet he did not wear any ceremonial clothes or deliver a set speech, in contrast to my black sherwani and written essay.

At the banquet on the night of our arrival, Rene talked about relations between the two countries and acknowledged the help of Indian doctors, engineers, school teachers and accountants in building the country. He alluded to the effort to promote regional cooperation among the island states in south-west Indian Ocean through the Indian Ocean Commission.

In my reply I commended the environmental conservation and protection of the heritage endowed by Provi-

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

dence on Seychelles and wished it continued success in maintaining the paradise in its pristine form. I referred to the great power rivalry in and militarisation of the Indian Ocean and advocated its declaration as a zone of peace. Since economic independence was the foundation on which other freedoms stand, I urged that ways and means be found to promote collective self-reliance of developing countries through greater South–South cooperation.

On September 24, we went to the Bird Island where there were literally millions of birds flying about. I am no ornithologist and can scarcely distinguish a dove from a crow but I was fascinated by the sight. In the afternoon we visited the marine park, which I found even more fascinating. Before leaving I invited Rene to pay a state visit to India which he gladly accepted. We returned home on September 25.

During the first week of October a Cabinet Minister expressed dissatisfaction over the composition of the Election Commission and wanted it to be expanded by two more members. The Election Commission was headed by Peri Sastri (formerly Secretary to the Law Department), a conscientious stickler for the rules. The reason for expansion of the commission was stated to be the increased workload following the reduction of voting age from 21 to 18. I told the Cabinet Minister that it was purely an administrative matter to be decided by the government, and I appointed two more members on the recommendation of the government.

On October 12, newspapers published the text of a letter dated August 15, 1989, addressed to me by my friend and colleague C. Subramaniam. In the letter he dealt elaborately with the report of the CAG relating to the Bofors gun deal and stated that the President, as Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, had the authority to examine the report "outside the purview of Article 74(1) of the Constitution" and

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

act on his "own independent conclusions". I pondered over the idea and found nothing in the Constitution which gave validity to the suggestion. It is well known that the President is only a titular head of the Armed Forces and cannot issue any directions to the Forces except through the Ministry of Defence. In my view, the Constitution of India did not envisage the President as an appellate authority over the government but only as a symbol of State with defined powers. Therefore, I did not pursue the matter.

On October 17, Rajiv Gandhi called on me and conveyed the government's decision to call for general elections in November, 1989. On my enquiring he mentioned November 24, 25, 26 as possible poll dates. There was hardly any time left for selection of candidates or for preparations for the elections and I expressed my doubts. Rajiv Gandhi was confident and added that he was also thinking of holding elections simultaneously to the Assemblies of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and U.P.

The same day the Election Commission announced dates for polls to the ninth Lok Sabha, to the Andhra Pradesh, Sikkim and Goa Assemblies and for some by-elections. This took the country completely by surprise. Critics had been guessing that the elections would be postponed beyond January 14, 1990, the date on which the life of the eighth Lok Sabha ended. Following the announcement, the country immediately came under the grip of election fever. Campaigning was marked by violence everywhere. In Punjab, Simranjit Singh Mann, who was in jail, put up a set of candidates including the widow of Satwant Singh, one convicted for assassination of Indira Gandhi.

Rajmohan Gandhi, grandson of Gandhiji and Rajaji, filed his nomination papers for election from the Amethi constituency from where Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was contesting. Cases of violence and intimidation were reported

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

in one of the Assembly constituencies within the Amethi Lok Sabha constituency. Soli J. Sorabjee, former Solicitor-General, L.P. Singh, former Home Secretary, Ramachandra Gandhi, and one or two others met me and presented a memorandum complaining about the violence, intimidation and rigging and demanded a repoll in the entire parliamentary constituency. They called themselves 'Independent Initiative', a watchdog group for the elections. It has become fashionable to call every opponent of the Congress "independent" and even the President is considered independent if he acts against the government. I listened to them patiently without commenting and finally agreed to refer the complaint to the Election Commission which really controls the elections.

It is the practice of the President's Secretariat to forward representations to the departments concerned. Since the post of Secretary to the President was vacant and since the memorandum was addressed to the Election Commission and not to a department of government, I signed the letter stating that the Election Commission should deal with it "as appropriate". The Election Commissioner, in his Press conference, however, mentioned that the President had asked the Commission to take appropriate action creating an impression that I had ordered an enquiry. The Election Commission sent a team to the Amethi constituency to make an on-the-spot study on the complaint. The enquiry resulted in a re-poll in 97 booths.

Half way through the campaign my sixth sense warned me that no party would secure a majority and I would have to face a litmus test. I called the Attorney-General and asked him to prepare a note on the possible alternatives in case of a hung Parliament. I started refreshing my memory by reading Ivor Jennings, Berridale Keith, Hood Philips and Halsbury's *Laws of England*. According to the British

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

precedents, the Crown had called the single largest party, the Conservatives in 1924 and the Labour Party in 1929, to form the government. The view of Ivor Jennings that a party defeated in the House or in the polls may not be called to form the government was not sustained by the precedents.

Around this time, the Home Ministry sent proposals for appointment of a dozen judges to the High Courts. I returned the file noting that as the election process had commenced, it was not desirable to make appointments to important offices. It was represented to me that the present government was in office commanding a majority in the Lok Sabha and not just a caretaker government and therefore these appointments which had been approved by the Chief Justice of India and the States, might be accepted. I explained that though legally the contention was right, propriety and democratic conventions called for restraint in such matters after the election process had started. I was told that President Sanjeeva Reddy had taken a similar view earlier. I was happy that my suggestion was respected and nothing more was heard about it.

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) had planned *shilanyas*, i.e., laying the foundation stone, for the Ram temple in Ayodhya on November 9, and was determined to go ahead with it, despite the election process being underway. Bricks had been collected from all over India and taken in procession to Ayodhya with great fervour. The BJP fully backed this move as it would be the electoral beneficiary of this mass upsurge. There were counter-threats from the Muslim community that if the Babri Masjid was disturbed, they would resist it with their lives. They also announced their decision to encircle the area and prevent any move to lay the foundation stone. An ominous situation was developing in the area. Meanwhile, the Lucknow High Court issued a clarificatory order stating that the site of *shilanyas* was

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

outside the area covered by its injunction order of 1989. Home Minister Buta Singh met me on the evening of November 8 and said that the *shilanyas* would be held outside the demarcated area and both sides were satisfied with the arrangement. He showed me the plan of the demarcated area referred to by the High Court and the site of the *shilanyas* outside it. Thus, an ugly situation during elections was averted and I congratulated Buta Singh on the success of his efforts.

On November 11, I inaugurated the sixth meeting of the South Commission in New Delhi. The Chairman of the Commission, Julius Nyerere, and the Secretary-General, Dr. Manmohan Singh, had been working tirelessly to organise negotiations with the North. Addressing the session I said, "In a world where developed countries of the North remain largely preoccupied with their own particular concerns, collective self-reliance among the countries of the South should by now have acquired a new significance, relevance and urgency." I called for a more equitable distribution of goods and services and technologies which the countries of the South possess. To draw freely and easily on one another's resources, I emphasised the need for preparing a directory of all goods and services available and technologies developed in the countries of the South. I concluded by saying that the government policy makers were awaiting the Commission's findings and recommendations.

At the Nehru Stadium on November 14, there was a colourful opening ceremony of the eighth Asian Track and Field Meet. The spectacular part of the show was the torch relay to light the flame for the meet. Eminent sports persons — Prakash Padukone from the south, P.K. Banerjee from the east, Bishen Singh Bedi from the north and Sunil Gavaskar from the west — brought the Jawahar Jyoti and handed them to the Prime Minister. All the flames were merged and then

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

taken in and handed over to Milkha Singh and Valsamma, two eminent sport persons who ignited the grand flame. I formally declared the Meet open and the Prime Minister made a short speech eulogising the contributions of Jawaharlal Nehru as it was his birth anniversary.

The ninth general elections were marred by widespread violence, intimidation and booth capturing by all parties, ruling as well as opposition. Their mutual recrimination made no impact on me as reports showed that malpractices were not resorted to by one party only.

The election results started pouring in from the evening of November 26. The southern States of Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu gave a sweeping majority to the Congress(I) while very few Congress candidates were returned from Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh. Bihar, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh gave a severe drubbing to the Congress while not even a single Congress member was returned from Rajasthan. It was clear that the Congress had not only lost the majority but also was struggling to reach even 200 seats.

BJP leader L.K. Advani urged publicly that the eighth Lok Sabha should be dissolved and wrote a letter to me also. A number of others joined the demand for dissolution before the constitution of the ninth Lok Sabha. They apprehended that the newly-elected representatives might switch loyalties without attracting the anti-defection law. There was a conflict of opinion among eminent jurists about the applicability of the anti-defection law to candidates who had been elected but had not become members. The Election Commission was of the view that candidates once elected on a party ticket could not defect. It was contended that the anti-defection law applied from the moment the returning officer gave a certificate to the elected representative. It appeared to me that since Clause (2) of the 52nd Constitution Amend-

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

ment states that a member of the House would be disqualified if he voluntarily gave up his membership of the political party, it lent scope for the argument that the defector was not a member of the House on the date of his change of allegiance and that this might encourage parties to suborn loyalties. But I had no power to dissolve the House without a recommendation from the Prime Minister.

On November 27, the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, B.G. Deshmukh, called on me to review the situation emerging out of the clear defeat of the Congress government. I advised him that in order to avoid rumours of Rajiv Gandhi nefariously trying to win over newly elected members, the Prime Minister could recommend dissolution of the eighth Lok Sabha forthwith. Deshmukh agreed with me and added that the Prime Minister was also thinking on the same lines. In the course of the day, the Prime Minister's recommendation for dissolution was received which I promptly accepted and ordered issue of a notification to that effect.

By November 28, it became clear that the Congress had lost even though the entire election results had not come out. Jurists and lawyers started examining the consequences of a "hung" Parliament. They harried me with advice publicly through the media and privately through letters. These were mostly partisan. Some cajoled me saying that I was a fair and honest man and that I should call the opposition party to form the government. Some tried to intimidate me saying that if I called the Congress to form the government I would go down ignominiously in national history. Soli J. Sorabjee, former Solicitor-General and an expert in constitutional law, said in an erudite article that the British precedents had established that when a ruling party had been defeated in general elections, only the Opposition should be called to form the government. Apparently he had relied on a passage

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

in Ivor Jennings' *Constitutional Government*. Dr. Chitale, another expert in constitutional law, opined that in case the nation was faced with a "hung" Parliament, the President should invite the leader of the single largest party to form the government. Another senior lawyer said it might be prudent for the President in such a situation to invite the leader of the largest party to avoid criticism.

My head started reeling with such an array of contradictory advice and I decided to go through all the authoritative books on this issue and look carefully into the British precedents. I found that in 1923 when the ruling Conservative Party lost its majority in the general election but remained the largest single party, the Crown invited its leader Baldwin to form the government. When the party was defeated in the House, the Crown asked the next largest party, the Labour Party, to form the government, which it was able to do with the help of the Liberals. Again, in the 1929 general elections when the Conservative Party lost and the Labour Party became the largest single party, the Crown called the Labour Party to form the Ministry. So far as the British precedents were concerned, the Crown had followed as a rule the practice of calling the largest party to form the government.

I, however, saw substance in the plea that a defeated ruling party should not be asked to form the Ministry as it had forfeited the mandate of the people. But I also saw the danger of vesting discretion without objective criteria in the President. While the monarchy in Britain is hereditary and unconnected with parties, the President of India is elected by the majority party and his actions could be partisan or liable to be questioned as partisan. On the other hand, if he followed strictly the criterion of calling the largest party, he would avoid the charge of partisanship. Besides, the President would not be able to play politics by calling a party

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

other than the largest on the basis of his subjective assessment that such a party, in his opinion, was capable of providing a stable government.

It finally turned out that the Congress was the largest single party with 194 members, while the Janata Dal and its allies in the National Front got 145, the BJP 82 and the CPI(M) group 55 seats. I knew that if I offered Rajiv Gandhi the option to form the government I would be abused, criticised and condemned by the opposition parties and the media. If I did not, I would be dishonest to my conviction regarding the correct course of action.

On November 28, Principal Secretary Deshmukh again called on me to discuss the modalities regarding the resignation of the Cabinet. I advised him that the Cabinet should immediately tender its resignation and accept my request to continue in office till a new government was formed and taking into account the strength of the Congress and its allies — the AIADMK, the National Conference, etc., which added up to only 205 members, the Prime Minister should not stake a claim for forming the government. I pointed out that a government formed by the Congress was bound to be defeated when a no-confidence motion was passed within three or four weeks and that Rajiv Gandhi's image would get tarnished as a power-hungry manipulator. Deshmukh appreciated my reaction and promised to convey it to the Prime Minister. A little later, one Congress leader came with a suggestion that in order to lend prestige to the Prime Minister, I might give Rajiv Gandhi, as leader of the largest party, the option to form the Ministry and he could, after consideration, decline the responsibility. I did not respond to the suggestion.

In the afternoon, K. Karunakaran, Chief Minister of Kerala and member of the Congress Working Committee, dropped in for a discussion on the future course of action. I

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

informed him of the three options the Congress had:

i) Stake a claim to form the government.
ii) Decline the responsibility to form the government.
iii) Unilaterally declare that in view of the election results, it was not staking a claim to form the government.

The last option, I said, would enhance the prestige of the Congress and its leader but it was entirely for the Prime Minister to decide on the course of action. I carefully avoided disclosing what I would do if other options were exercised by the party.

Late in the evening, the then Foreign Minister, P.V. Narasimha Rao, met me and said he was doing so at the instance of the Prime Minister. He told me that the Cabinet had considered all possible courses of action and had decided to make a unilateral announcement that the party was not staking a claim to form the government. The decision, I learnt, was not reached without heated discussion and when some ministers urged Rajiv Gandhi to offer to form the government and gain support with the lure of office to the erstwhile Congressmen who had joined the Janata Dal, Rajiv Gandhi put his foot down firmly and carried the view conveyed to me by Narasimha Rao. I did not mention to him my advice to Rajiv Gandhi conveyed through Deshmukh and Karunakaran.

At 11 a.m. on Wednesday, November 29, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi made a formal call and handed over the letter of resignation of the Council of Ministers. He was bright, warm and cheerful and if he had any pain or anguish over the defeat, his face and demeanour did not show any trace of it. Usually at our meetings, Rajiv Gandhi helped himself liberally to sweets, all the time protesting that it added to his girth and this day was no exception. He talked determinedly

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education,Bantalab,Jammu

of rebuilding the party and recapturing power much before the usual five-year term. He said that the defeat was a necessary shock treatment to his complacement self-seeking party bosses. I accepted his resignation and requested the Council of Ministers to continue in office till a new government was formed.

In the afternoon Rajiv Gandhi wanted to make a short statement on Doordarshan. Some doubts were raised whether a Prime Minister who had resigned had a right to address the nation through the state media. I decided that even as the retiring President makes a farewell address to the nation, the same facility should be given to the Prime Minister, subject, of course, to the script conforming to accepted norms. In a sober and dignified address Rajiv Gandhi said that "in all humility" his party respected the verdict of the people and would offer constructive co-operation to the new government that would be formed. He pledged that he would continue to serve the people of India with all his strength. He thanked the people profusely for their kindness, courtesy and affection.

The Congress Parliamentary Board decided not to stake its claim to form a government at the Centre at this juncture, though it had emerged as the single largest party in the elections.

The media either missed the significance of Rajiv Gandhi's statement that he would offer constructive cooperation to the new government, implying that he was not in the run for forming the government, or deliberately underplayed it. It did not give him credit for enabling the smooth transition of power. His decision to dissolve the eighth Lok Sabha and not to stake a claim to form the government, even though his was the largest party, deserve recognition. I heaved a sigh of relief as the problem of choosing the Prime Minister had been solved by Rajiv

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Gandhi himself.

While the decks had been cleared for the formation of a government by the opposition groups, the squabble for leadership emerged prominently within the National Front. Chandra Shekhar announced his decision to contest for leadership of the Front and attempts to get V.P. Singh elected unanimously did not make headway.

On November 30, Tamil Nadu DMK leader Karunanidhi paid me a visit. I told him that after Rajiv Gandhi's announcement, I was waiting for the National Front, of which the DMK was a part, to give me the name of its leader, but none had come so far. Throughout the day there was confusion over the choice of the leader. Senior advocate Ram Jethmalani staged a dharna in front of Chandra Shekhar's house urging him to withdraw from the contest. There was a scuffle and pictures of it appeared in some newspapers.

On the evening of November 30, Rajiv Gandhi and V.S. Arunachalam, Scientific Adviser to Defence Minister, called on me and updated me on certain confidential defence matters. Some of it was known to me as Defence Minister. I had been kept informed of further developments from time to time in a few others. They wanted that these may be communicated to the new Prime Minister in an appropriate manner. It was only then that I realised the importance of a link between the retiring and the new governments. To a casual enquiry about his future residence, Rajiv Gandhi said he was thinking of moving to his farmhouse at Mehrauli. I disapproved of the idea and suggested that he stay where he would be well protected.

During the interval before a new government was formed, Rajiv Gandhi told me that the King of Jordan had presented him a car and a sophisticated jeep and if he retained them, customs duty would have to be paid by him. He wanted to hand them over to Rashtrapati Bhavan. I said

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

while the Mercedes would save expenditure on the proposed new car and would be welcome, the jeep might prove redundant. Nevertheless, I accepted them and added them to the Rashtrapati Bhavan garage.

Atal Behari Vajpayee of the BJP floated the idea of a National Government of all parties, including the Congress, to tide over the difficulty. This had few takers. There was no agreement on the person to lead the coalition nor on the composition of the parties constituting the National Government. Some parties wanted to exclude the Congress, some others the BJP, and the whole idea fizzled out.

On December 1, the National Front met to elect its leader. It was reported to me that initially Devi Lal's name was proposed by V.P. Singh and seconded by Chandra Shekhar, but Devi Lal declined and, instead, proposed V.P. Singh for leadership. Chandra Shekhar expressed his reservation but as there was no other proposal, V.P. Singh was declared elected unanimously amidst scenes of wild enthusiasm.

At about 7 p.m., V.P. Singh, Madhu Dandavate, Dinesh Goswami and a few others called on me. Dandavate, who was the chairman of the meeting which elected V.P. Singh as leader, handed over to me a letter to the effect. He also handed over another letter saying that the BJP with 85 members and the Left Front with 52 members had pledged their support to a National Front government. I replied that "as the largest single party had not staked its claim to form the government, I invite you (V.P. Singh) as the leader of the second largest party to form the government and take a vote of confidence of the House within 21-30 days." V.P. Singh wished to have 30 days and I agreed.

Just then Devi Lal came in and he reinforced the claim of V.P. Singh. I said I was not looking into the quantum of support and it was for them to establish it in the House. I then told V.P. Singh that I would like to swear him in as Prime

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Minister on the next day, December 2, and that the other Ministers could be sworn in later at his convenience. Perhaps he was not expecting it and was a little taken aback. But I told him that I would prefer swearing him in as Prime Minister immediately after his election as leader so that the normal work of government could proceed without the constraints that a caretaker administration had.

Around 8 p.m. Jyoti Basu and Left Front leaders came in and informed of me their support to V.P. Singh and a National Front government. I explained to Jyoti Basu that I had not looked into the measure of support which the National Front had, but had invited V.P. Singh as the leader of the second largest party to form the government. It was for him to establish his majority in the House.

Late in the night, I issued a communique which said: "Since the Congress (I), elected to the ninth Lok Sabha with the largest membership, has not opted to stake its claim for forming a government, I have invited Sri. V.P. Singh, leader of the second largest party/group, namely Janata Dal/ National Front, to form a government and take a vote of confidence in the Lok Sabha within 30 days of assuming office."

Some people questioned the propriety of the President imposing a condition on the Prime Minister to take a vote of confidence within a stipulated period. They said the Constitution envisages only the appointment of the Prime Minister and there was no provision for a stipulation that he should take vote of confidence within a stipulated period. The Karnataka High Court, before which a writ petition was filed, dismissed the plea on the ground that the stipulation was in accordance with well-known conventions.

The swearing-in ceremony of V.P. Singh as Prime Minister was fixed for 12 noon on December 2, 1989. Around 10 o'clock that day I was told that Devi Lal would also take

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

the oath at the same time as Deputy Prime Minister. I asked my Secretary to convey to V.P. Singh that Devi Lal would be sworn in only as a Minister and designated later as Deputy Prime Minister. But before anything could be finalised, the ceremony commenced and V.P. Singh was sworn in as Prime Minister. Then Devi Lal was presented and when I administered the oath as *"Mantri"*, he insisted on reading it as *"Up Pradhan Mantri"*. I corrected him saying *"Mantri"* again but the second time also he read it as *"Up Pradhan Mantri"*. This was fully displayed in the live telecast of the proceedings. I did not want to create an ugly scene and therefore allowed Devi Lal to proceed as he wished. There was a lot of criticism of Devi Lal in the Press for deviating from the text of the oath and reading the words "Deputy Prime Minister", instead of "Minister". At the tea following the ceremony, I replied to the journalists that the country has had Deputy Prime Ministers in the past such as Sardar Patel, Morarji Desai, Charan Singh and Jagjivan Ram, but they were all sworn in as Minister and later designated Deputy Prime Minister. The journalists had noted my correcting Devi Lal when he misread the oath of office and called his action an impropriety. I just laughed away their comments.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

22

The security arrangements in Rashtrapati Bhavan are not under the control of the President or his Military Secretary but are entirely with the Home Ministry. I have earlier explained the irksome restrictions on the President himself. On one occasion even my own granddaughter, who was living with me, was not allowed to enter by the main door as a very high security foreign dignitary was having an audience with me in the main hall. Several friends of mine have been subjected to security checks, causing resentment against me under the impression that I was responsible for the indignity suffered.

These resentments came to a head when the security people did not spare even the judges invited to dinner during the annual Judges Conference convened by the Chief Justice of India. There was one such dinner on December 5. When I went around greeting the guests, one or two judges of the Supreme Court complained about the security people asking them to walk through the metal detector. I was upset and when I asked the Military Secretary and the Secretary to the President about this practice, they repeated that the security arrangements were under the control of the Home Ministry and the system had been in vogue for some time. Later I received a letter from one of the judges who had complained to me at the dinner about the discourtesy shown to the judges. I immediately referred the letter to the Home Ministry and also asked my secretary to write to the secretary to the Judge

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

that the matter had been referred to the Home Ministry which controlled the security arrangements. The Home Ministry came back with its usual bureaucratic explanations. Finally, it was resolved that by posting some persons to identify judges and dignitaries so that the security staff could observe the usual courtesies. I am sure that judges also would have swelled the ranks of people dissatisfied with me over the security staff's behaviour.

For two days after the swearing-in of the Prime Minister, heated discussions went on among National Front leaders regarding the formation of the Cabinet. On December 4, the Prime Minister and his wife called to felicitate me on my birthday. Later in the evening the Prime Minister informed me that other Cabinet Ministers could be sworn in on December 5 at 11 a.m. However, it was postponed to 5 p.m. due to various claims and counter-claims concerning inclusion and exclusion from the Cabinet. It appears to have been a day of hard bargaining. Prominent among those included in the Cabinet were Madhu Dandavate, George Fernandes, Ajit Singh, I.K. Gujral, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed and Arun Nehru. Ramakrishna Hegde, who was tipped for Deputy Prime Ministership in the media, did not figure in the list but was appointed Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission. Out of the 19 names given to me, two, Nathu Ram Mirdha and Yashwant Sinha, did not take the oath. The ceremony was held in the Ashoka Hall with the usual pomp and glitter and was followed by tea. The Prime Minister indicated that there would be expansion of the Council of Ministers.

On December 9, I paid a visit to Calcutta and called on the ailing Mother Teresa in a nursing home. I wished her a long and healthy life because the world needed her love. When Mother Teresa thanked me for taking the trouble to visit her I replied it was a national duty as well as a personal one.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

On December 11, I went to Daltonganj in Bihar and unveiled a statue of Rajendra Prasad, the first President of India. In my speech I lamented the loss of Gandhian values such as non-violence, communal harmony and service to the community which animated patriots during the freedom struggle. I referred to the historic Champaran *satyagraha* under Rajen Babu's leadership and his selfless service to the nation. I concluded, "We cannot bring back Gandhiji or Rajendra Babu but we can bring back the principles and practices for which they stood."

On December 8, hardly four days after the appointment of Mufti Mohammad Sayeed as Minister for Home Affairs, his daughter Rubiya, aged 23, was kidnapped by the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front terrorists at Nowgam near Srinagar. They demanded the release of five of their colleagues held in detention by the Kashmir government, before 7 p.m. on December 10, failing which they threatened to kill the hostage. Feverish negotiations were conducted with the terrorists. Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah, who had returned to Srinagar from abroad, directed officials to pursue all methods to secure the safe return of Rubiya. Negotiations continued beyond the deadline fixed by the militants. Finally on December 13, the five detenus were released by the Kashmir government and after a few anxious hours Rubiya was released by the militants. The entire nation expressed relief over the happy end of the trauma. I spoke to the Mufti and shared my joy with him at the restoration of his daughter to the family.

Sripat Amrit Dange, known as S.A. Dange, was felicitated on his completion of ninety years of age at a grand function in the Durbar Hall of the Raj Bhavan, Bombay, before a packed elite audience on December 17. Governor Brahmananda Reddi and Chief Minister Sharad Pawar added dignity to the event by their participation.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Delivering the felicitation address, I described Dange, whom I had the privilege of knowing for decades when I was active in the trade union movement, as "the Bhishma Pitamaha of the labour movement" in India and one of the greatest living representatives of the freedom struggle. Dange personified the creative mutuality between India's liberation movement and its labour movement, I stated. Describing Dange as an intrepid crusader for social justice, I called on the younger generation to emulate his life of service, sacrifice and patriotism. A unique aspect of Dange's life was that he was deeply appreciated by both the intellectuals and the masses. An elegant speaker with a delicate touch of humour and sarcasm, he was heard with rapt attention in the tripartite labour conferences and in the legislature.

The ninth Lok Sabha was summoned to meet on December 18. In accordance with the convention, the seniormost member of the House, Prof. N.G. Ranga, was appointed Speaker *pro tem* and I administered the oath to him at Rashtrapati Bhavan at 9 a.m. When the House met, V.P. Singh occupied the first seat on the right as Prime Minister and Rajiv Gandhi the first seat on the left as leader of the Opposition — a triumph of democracy in India. The first two days, December 18 and 19, were devoted to oath-taking by members.

On December 18, I also administered the oath of office to Sabyasachi Mukherji as Chief Justice of India and later to M.G.K. Menon as Minister of State in the Council of Ministers.

On December 19, after all members had been sworn in, the government proposed Rabi Ray, a former minister in the Janata government of 1977, for the post of Speaker of the Lok Sabha. It was said that the Prime Minister had consulted the Leader of the Opposition but got neither his assent nor dissent. Some other parties complained that they had not been

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

consulted. Where there was no official opposition party, the groups used to be consulted but once an official Opposition was recognised, the other groups could not insist to be consulted though the courtesy might be extended to them.

The President's address to members of both the Houses of Parliament at 11 a.m. on December 20 was enacted with the customary pomp and ceremony and was telecast live for the first time in India. The address was short, crisp and dignified, without harsh or uncomplimentary attacks on the previous government. It also avoided any rigmarole about the economy and spelt out the programme of the new government. The phrase 'My government' was repeated far too many times. Perhaps V.P. Singh wanted my identification with the new government forcefully asserted. The programmes set out by the National Front Government in the President's address included the following legislative measures:

- The setting up of a Lok Pal with jurisdiction over the Prime Minister.
- Amendment to the Official Secrets Act to provide increased access to information.
- Affording autonomy to Doordarshan and All India Radio.
- Repeal of the 59th Amendment to the Constitution and the amendment to the Commission of Enquiry Act.
- Inclusion of land reform laws in the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution.
- Administrative measures to contain inflation and to tackle the balance of payments problem.
- Streamlining the public sector to ensure its profitability and provide debt relief to marginal farmers.

The speech was as usual interrupted by a member who wanted to be noticed by the viewers of the live telecast. He

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

must have been disappointed because the TV ignored his interruption and focused attention elsewhere.

The speech was a straightforward commitment to tackle the national problems and it also conformed to Article 87 of the Constitution which requires the address to "inform Parliament of the causes of its summons".

The day following the President's address, the National Front government moved a single sentence motion that "this House expresses its confidence in the Council of Ministers". Normally such motions are not debated but are immediately voted upon in order to establish that the government enjoys the confidence of the House. The Congress Opposition, however, wanted a debate and launched a frontal attack on the Government. The debate ran its course for five hours at the end of which the motion was carried by a voice vote with the official Opposition party, Congress, abstaining.

The debate on the motion of thanks to the President was on predictable lines and proved lively. Rajiv Gandhi in his marathon speech displayed his skill as leader of the Opposition and caused some embarrassing moments to the government with questions relating to Justice Bhatt's intervention and negotiations with the terrorists for Dr. Rubiya Sayeed's release. Prime Minister V.P. Singh, in a fighting reply, dealt with all the points with the cool deliberation of an adept debater. The debate was easily the most lively one in recent years. Shorn of acrimony, the ninth Lok Sabha, I thought, would touch a high watermark in parliamentary debates.

I had earlier dealt with the assent I had given to the 59th Amendment to the Constitution. The Janata Dal had included in its election manifesto the repeal of this amendment as one of its items. However, as the National Front did not have the requisite two-third majority in either House of Parliament, an agreement with the Congress enabled the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

measure to be passed. It was this kind of responsive cooperation I had always advocated in our legislature and I hoped that the same spirit would prevail on matters of national concern.

On December 31, the government sent a file recommending that the two posts of Election Commissioners created by the previous government in October 1989 be abolished and that the employment of the incumbents cease from the date of the order. It was supported by legal opinion of the Attorney-General, who gave his opinion that:

(1) the earlier order creating the two posts stipulated that it was "until further orders";
(2) under the General Clauses Act the authority which had the power to create a post had also the power to abolish it; and
(3) there was no removal of Election Commissioners but only abolition of additional posts.

Therefore the government had the power to abolish the posts and deprive the incumbents of their office. It has always been my habit to refer to the section, rule or regulation before taking a decision. I therefore referred to Article 324 of the Constitution which deals with the Election Commission and which had not been referred to in the legal opinion. The proviso to Clause (5) of Article 324 states that any other Election Commissioner or a Regional Commissioner shall not be removed from office except on the recommendation of the Chief Election Commissioner. The legal opinion furnished to me did not refer to Article 324 at all. I therefore asked my Deputy Secretary to seek clarification on the following points:

(1) whether a recommendation from the Chief Election Commissioner for the abolition of the additional posts had been received in this case; and

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

(2) whether constitutional authorities could be deprived of their office by abolition of posts.

I also pointed out that since there was a specific provision in Clause (5) of Article 324 regarding the Election Commission, the General Clauses Act could not be invoked.

On January 1, 1990, Law Minister Dinesh Goswami and Attorney-General Soli Sorabjee called on me and offered explanations. They argued that the Constitution dealt with the removal of other Election Commissioners and that the abolition of posts did not constitute 'removal' and cited case law in support.

I told them that the Constitution envisaged a degree of independence to authorities like judges, the CAG and the Election Commission and that was why special provisions had been made in the Constitution against arbitrary termination of these offices. If the executive thought that there was not enough work for three Election Commissioners there should be a recommendation to that effect from the Chief Election Commissioner as contemplated in the Constitution. I also asked them to look up if there were any precedents where the posts of other Election Commissioners or Regional Commissioners were abolished.

The same day the government sent a revised opinion from the Attorney-General containing a letter from the Chief Election Commissioner stating that he agreed with the opinion expressed by the reputed authors of the book on parliamentary practice in India (Kaul and Shakder), that there was not enough work for three Election Commissioners. They also cited some precedents in 1950 when the experiment of having Regional Commissioners was tried and later these posts were abolished. On the basis of the recommendation of the Chief Election Commissioner for abolition of the posts of Additional Commissioner, I approved the proposal.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

It may be recalled that I had asked the Rajiv Gandhi government to furnish me with the opinion of the Attorney-General regarding the constitutional validity of the Post Office Amendment Bill. Though the reference was made in 1987, no reply had come from the government. It appeared that the then Attorney-General had advised that the proposed amendment offended the Constitution but it was not communicated to me. On January 6, Prime Minister V.P. Singh suggested that the Bill may be returned to both Houses of Parliament for reconsideration of Clause 16 which conferred the power to intercept postal articles. I immediately acceded to the advice. This brought the unpleasant episode to an end.

The appointment of Devi Lal as Deputy Prime Minister was challenged before the Supreme Court on the ground that there was no provision in the Constitution for the post of Deputy Prime Minister, and if the government's power to create such offices was recognised, it could open the door to the appointment of a Deputy Chief Justice of India or a Deputy Election Commissioner, etc. During the hearing, Attorney-General Soli Sorabjee conceded that "there is no constitutional sanction for the post of Deputy Prime Minister as such" and that "describing Devi Lal as Deputy Prime Minister is descriptive only and for all purposes he is a Minister..." I am afraid these statements of grave constitutional implications recorded by the judges in their order may create problems in future.

On January 14, 1990, Home Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed called on me and showed me a list of Governors whom he wanted to remove and hinted that I might convey this information to them. I felt that if I conveyed this to some Governors it might create an impression that I wanted some to go and some to stay. We then discussed the issue and in consultation with the Prime Minister, decided that resig-

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

nation of all the Governors might be sought and the resignations of those accepted whom the Government wanted to change.

In the meanwhile, General K.V. Krishna Rao, Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, wrote a letter to me saying that in view of the change in the Union Government, he was ready to resign his office. I forwarded the letter to the Home Ministry but there was no reaction. General Krishna Rao again wrote to me that he was resigning his office and I forwarded the letter to the government with the endorsement "Recommended for acceptance".

In accordance with the decision to call for resignation of all Governors, I sent a letter to them which ran as follows:

Dear Governor,

I am advised that the government wishes to change the Governor of your state.

Your resignation may therefore be forwarded at your earliest convenience.

Yours etc.,

As a courtesy to the Governors I asked my Secretary/Joint Secretary to convey the decision to the Secretaries to the Governors. The Governors sent their resignations in due course. The Governor of Orissa, Prof. Nurul Hasan, told me over the telephone that under the Constitution, the letter of resignation took effect immediately and therefore he would not deliver the address to the Orissa Legislature which was to meet shortly. I thought it was a wrong interpretation and so I called the Attorney-General for consultations. On January 16, he met me and advised me that the resignation of the Governor became effective as soon as it was sent in the manner prescribed under Article 156 (Clause 2). He relied on a Supreme Court judgement of 1978 where it was held that in

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

case of resignation of a judge, the resignation took effect immediately. The court further made an observation that these constitutional dignitaries have the privilege of demitting office on their unilateral volition. The Attorney-General stated that the language of Article 156 (2) was identical with Article 217 (11) (a) and therefore, the Governors who tendered his resignation by a letter, ceased to be Governor.

I explained to the Attorney-General that Article 153 stipulates that there shall be a Governor for each State and there cannot be a vacancy in office. I also drew his attention to Article 156 (3) which provides for the Governor continuing in office in case of expiry of his term until his successor enters office and to Article 160 authorising the President to make provision for discharge of the functions of the Governor in certain contingencies. In my view, these Articles, read together, clearly established that there cannot be a vacancy in the office of Governor even for a moment and that the Governor cannot shoot a letter to the President and walk out of office until someone takes his post. I explained that in this respect, the position of a Governor differed from that of a judge. I also pointed out the chaotic situation that would arise if at the time of a grave political crisis in a state its Governor darts a letter to the President and deserts office.

Soli Sorabjee is one of the most reasonable men I have come across. Instead of talking back which he could have done more effectively than I, he agreed to have my view examined. He sent a modified opinion that the Governor continued till a successor entered office. Thereupon, I sent a circular to all the Governors stating that I was advised that the Governors who had tendered their resignation would continue in office till alternative arrangements were made. Initially, the media welcomed the idea of asking all the Governors to tender their resignation. *The Times of India* said,

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College of Education, Bantalab Jammu

"To have asked only some of the incumbents to quit, while leaving the rest in place, would not only have been discriminatory, it would have smacked of political vindictiveness. The government's modified decision to have all Governors submit resignations and to accept only those it wants to, is a much more satisfactory way of handling what is, after all, a delicate matter." However, the muted criticism of the government gathered momentum when the Home Minister said at a Press conference that there ought to be a convention that when a new government took over at the Centre, the Governors should resign on their own to enable the government to appoint those who enjoyed its confidence. "The Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, General Krishna Rao, was the first to offer his resignation. Others did not do so...."

Had the government accepted the resignations of a few Governors and declined to do so in the case of others within two or three days, a lot of ugly incidents in the legislatures could have been avoided. The position of the 'lame duck' Governors became embarrassing. When they went to deliver the customary address to the legislature at the commencement of the session, they were humiliated by the Opposition irrespective of the party. A number of Governors urged me to accept their resignations immediately as they wanted to enter active politics.

The Governor of Maharashtra, Brahmananda Reddi, created a piquant situation by refusing to address the legislature on January 19. The Chief Justice of Maharashtra, Chittatosh Mukherji, had to be sworn in as acting Governor on the night of January 18 to avoid disruption of the practice. Nor was the choice of new Governors an easy process. A government dependent on other parties had to accommodate them and hence the process of appointing Governors dragged on for days. What should have been a swift move became a tardy process causing a lot of unpleasantness and

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

criticism.

On January 19, Prime Minister V.P. Singh and the Home Minister called on me and explained that law and order had practically collapsed in Kashmir and that the situation was worsening day by day. They proposed to appoint Jagmohan, who had earlier been an effective Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, again as Governor. I accepted the suggestion and informed General Krishna Rao immediately. When the news reached Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah, he was greatly upset.

The equation between Farooq Abdullah and Jagmohan had been none too good. It was Jagmohan who had recommended the dismissal of the Farooq Ministry during Indira Gandhi's regime in 1983. Farooq feared that this act would be repeated and he tendered his resignation on the night of January 19. When General Krishna Rao accepted the resignation and requested him to continue in office till an alternative government was formed, Dr. Farooq flatly refused. Attempts by his friends Jyoti Basu and Chandra Shekhar to persuade him to continue in office proved futile. This necessitated the promulgation of Governor's Rule under Article 92 of the Jammu and Kashmir Constitution. The Assembly was kept in suspended animation. Papers were hurriedly put up to me and these were immediately approved to avoid a constitutional impasse.

The situation in Srinagar took an ugly turn; people defied the curfew and came out on the streets challenging the government. There were reports of police mutiny though they were officially denied. But it was a fact that there was cross-firing between the local police and the C.R.P.F. At best, the government's control in Kashmir was only partial. Pakistan started fishing in troubled waters, stepping up insurgency activities with infiltrators and inflammatory statements. The Foreign Minister of Pakistan attending the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

SAARC meeting blatantly told our side that the Kashmir issue was very much alive. It was also reported that the Kashmir question would be reopened in the United Nations. It was the Soviet veto that had kept the Kashmir issue out of the U.N. since 1955. In the changed international environment, if the Soviet Union abstained, an adverse resolution on Kashmir against India could be carried in the Security Council. Foreign Secretary S.K. Singh, a senior and seasoned diplomat, was despatched to Moscow for talks. It was reported in the Press that the Soviets had affirmed their position that Kashmir was an integral part of India and that there should be no foreign interference.

On January 29, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed met me and talked about the appointment of Governors and about the Kashmir situation. I told him of my suggestion to the Prime Minister that Governor Jagmohan might be advised to constitute a peace committee of all Kashmiri leaders, such as Abdul Ghani Lone, Moulvi Farooq and Farooq Abdullah, irrespective of affiliations, so as to impress on the rest of the world that all responsible people were against terrorist activities and that the disruption of life in Kashmir was the work of anti-social elements. The Home Minister was not impressed with the idea; he felt that the local leaders, being terrorised by the militants, would not respond to the call of the Governor and the move might become infructuous. On the other hand he thought that the Prime Minister's proposal for an all-party meet on Kashmir might prove useful and wanted me to persuade Rajiv Gandhi to cooperate. I told Sayeed of my scheduled meeting with Rajiv Gandhi that afternoon and assured that I would speak to him.

After the "Beating Retreat" function, Rajiv Gandhi met me and gave his assessment of the situation in Kashmir. According to him, law and order had broken down completely in Srinagar; there was a mutiny by the local police

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

and the cross-firing between the C.R.P.F. and the local police had resulted in a number of casualties. He was candid enough to admit that Jagmohan could not be recalled within a week of his appointment but suggested that the Governor might contact Farooq Abdullah and other leaders in an effort to ease the tensions. I explained that Kashmir was a national issue and not a party matter and the Kashmir Government's failure in controlling the situation might internationalise the issue. I also reminded him of the Pakistani Foreign Minister's assertion that the issue would be raised in the United Nations. Rajiv Gandhi agreed that the issue should be faced by the nation solidly. He also responded readily to my suggestion for his participation in the all-party consultations. The same night I conveyed to the Home Minister, Rajiv Gandhi's willingness to cooperate with "any discussions on Kashmir". The Home Minister expressed his thanks a little too profusely which showed his relief.

On January 30, after the Martyr's Day ceremonies at Rajghat where Rajiv Gandhi was also present, I whispered to V.P. Singh that Rajiv Gandhi had agreed to cooperate fully with the government on the Kashmir issue. The Prime Minister immediately talked to Rajiv Gandhi and a good rapport was established. It was followed by V.P. Singh's invitation to Rajiv Gandhi for a dinner discussion and, though the 'dinner' could not come through, the 'discussion' took place at 10 p.m.

The government acted promptly by sending Foreign Secretary S.K. Singh to the USA to explain the situation in Kashmir. I had known S.K. Singh for decades when I used to attend the United Nations as a member of the Indian delegation and as U.N. Tribunal member. He is an able diplomat and an excellent negotiator. He was able to neutralise the USA and get an assurance that it stood by the Simla Agreement which provided for bilateral discussions

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

on all issues. It was a pity that he was taken out of the Foreign Office. V.P. Singh told me that he would make him the Governor of Sikkim but I felt the place suggested was not commensurate with S.K. Singh's qualifications, ability or his status. I had a feeling that V.P. Singh faced a lot of pressure from his National Front partners in these matters.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

23

During my return flight from Seychelles, I felt a block in my left ear. I thought it was the usual air pressure and carried on with it for a week; but the block became more intense. I consulted the ENT specialists but nothing proved of avail. This went on from September to December 1989 until some fluid collected at the back of the ear. A team of experts advised surgery to take out the fluid. They advised, as a matter of caution, that the surgery may be done abroad.

Immediately, the Military Secretary prepared an elaborate plan for a visit to the U.S. with a whole entourage of secretaries, A.D.C.s, cooks, *dhobies*, the lot. In the first place, I did not fancy rushing to the U.S. when we had such a great array of talented doctors in the country. It is true that post-operative hygiene and care abroad are excellent and our best hospitals do not match it. But it appeared to me that going abroad for minor ailments was an admission of defeat for India. So I declined to go abroad for the surgery and chose instead the military hospital in Delhi which maintains a good standard of aseptic conditions. This was deeply appreciated by the medical profession in the country. I was hospitalised from January 7 to 13, 1990.

When friends visiting me in the hospital asked whether I preferred the military hospital because of my association with Defence, I told them: "It is the only place where the medical personnel will not go on strike when I am on the operation table."

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

One Apte commented in verse:

PATRIOTIC PRESIDENT

To Mr. Venkataraman, India's President,
Goes the credit for setting a fine precedent,
Refusing to go to the otological centre in Los Angeles,
He preferred an Indian medical clinic in the land of the Ganges.
He put his complete faith in an Indian ENT surgeon,
Lent his precious ear for the required operation.
Surgery in his motherland saved a lot of foreign exchange,
Unlike past dignitaries, his behaviour was strange.
The President has filled native doctors' hearts with courage,
In the process, it would boost their image.
Now, total medical treatment in India no more a mirage,
But, ... will it curb our politicians' foreign craze?

The Republic Day festivities were spectacular as usual with a grand display of India's defence preparedness. The Prime Minister of Mauritius, Anerood Jagnauth, was the guest of honour for the year 1990. The new Prime Minister and members of the Cabinet enthusiastically participated in the proceedings. The day's ceremonies commenced with Prime Minister V.P. Singh laying a wreath at Amar Jawan Jyoti at India Gate in homage to the soldiers who laid down their lives for the nation. It was followed by the customary parade and cultural items. The nation's high honour, Padma Vibhushan was conferred on Dr. Abdul Kalam and Dr. V.S. Arunachalam, the two defence scientists who had achieved success in the missile programme. The Hindustani and Carnatic music masters, Kumar Gandharva and Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, were also the recipients of this award. However, Nikhil Chakravartty, an outstanding journalist of

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Delhi, declined the award of Padma Bhushan stating that the independence of the press would be compromised by accepting awards from the government.

In my Republic Day address I paid compliments to the nation for the successful conduct of the recent general elections. I said that nearly three hundred million people exercised their franchise and brought about a smooth transition in government, especially at a time when elsewhere changes had occurred through bitter and violent processes. I added that in a democracy the people had every right to change the government according to their wishes and monopoly of political power was an attribute of dictatorship. Describing terrorism as repugnant to our culture and civilisation, I appealed to those indulging in violence to return to the path of peace and reason. I concluded my address by quoting a Tamil poem which freely translated is as follows:

May the curse of separatism
And religious frenzy abate,
May our thoughts be lofty,
Our morale high,
May truth prevail everlastingly,
Long live the People's Republic of Bharat.

After V.P. Singh assumed office as Prime Minister, I told him to provide all necessary security arrangements to Rajiv Gandhi and members of his family which the Prime Minister readily agreed to do. He did not show any rancour or bitterness against Rajiv Gandhi. Thereafter, the government reviewed the security arrangements for the former Prime Minister and decided that the responsibility for security should rest with the Delhi Police. The government felt that since the Special Protection Group (SPG) was created by law for the Prime Minister, its cover could not be extended to the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

former Prime Minister and so the SPG was withdrawn.

Kamlapati Tripathi, the veteran Congress leader, wrote to the Prime Minister regarding the reduction in the level of security for Rajiv Gandhi and it was widely published in the Press. On February 8, Margaret Alva, former minister in Rajiv Gandhi's Cabinet, came to see me urgently. She complained that the standard of security arrangements had been reduced, that the Delhi Police was inefficient and the SPG protection should be restored to Rajiv Gandhi. She perceived, in the move of the government, a sinister intent to eliminate its serious rival in politics.

At night I spoke to V.P. Singh. He had just returned from a Cabinet meeting and his voice showed stress and strain in contrast to his usual smooth and pleasant manner of conversation. He reeled off figures of the number of personnel and cost of the security arrangements for Rajiv Gandhi. It amounted to Rs. 75 lakhs per annum. Over 125 security personnel had been deployed and this could be increased if necessary. Four bullet-proof cars and five escort vehicles had been provided for him and his family.

I told the Prime Minister that I had conveyed to him the apprehensions expressed to me by a number of people and that the safety and security of the former Prime Minister was the government's responsibility.

The next day, the Home Minister came and explained in detail the security arrangements made for Rajiv Gandhi. He said the Cabinet was strongly opposed to providing the same level of security to any other political figure. He repeated that whatever protection Rajiv Gandhi wanted, it would be extended to him. He also offered to transfer some SPG men, who had worked with Rajiv Gandhi earlier, to the Delhi Police establishment and post them with Rajiv Gandhi.

The Congress people mounted a campaign on the issue of security and a number of delegations, including some

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

former ministers, met me. They urged that the security for the leader of the Opposition should not be measured in terms of expenditure and added that the government was deliberately exposing their leader to risk. I explained to them the offer of the Home Minister to post men chosen by Rajiv Gandhi from the SPG in his security outfit by transferring them to the Delhi Police establishment. But the deputationists wanted nothing short of SPG deployment. Later, I talked to Rajiv Gandhi and the whole matter was smoothened out. I found both Rajiv Gandhi and V.P. Singh very reasonable and accommodative in resolving the issue.

Violence and arson continued unabated in the Kashmir Valley. Jagmohan did not want to have a dialogue with local leaders until a semblance of normalcy was restored through strong-arm tactics. Defiant processions reduced the government's authority to a farce. On March 3, when I was camping in Madras, I received a call from Rajiv Gandhi informing me that he and Narasimha Rao wished to meet me urgently the next day in Madras, regarding the situation in Kashmir. I thought their coming over to Madras would unnecessarily dramatise the issue and so told him that I would return to Delhi on March 4 and we could meet at 10 p.m. Accordingly, Rajiv Gandhi, Narasimha Rao, Farooq Abdullah and two others met me and gave their assessment of the situation in Kashmir.

They felt that the Kashmir Government had lost control over the Valley, and the strong-arm measures of Jagmohan had been counter-productive and had alienated the entire people. The police were threatening to go on strike and were refusing to obey orders of the administration. Repression had to be stopped and a political solution found. Farooq Abdullah added that Jagmohan should be recalled.

I told the deputationists that I shared their concern for restoration of normalcy in Kashmir and there should be a

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

national endeavour to achieve it. I appealed to Rajiv Gandhi to extend his fullest cooperation to arrive at a national consensus on the issue.

On March 5, V.P. Singh called on me at 12 noon and discussed the issue with me for 90 minutes. He frankly admitted that the situation was grave, the people of the Valley had turned hostile and there was no one who could control the situation. When Governor's rule was proclaimed, the Assembly was kept in suspended animation. Jagmohan, without consulting the Prime Minister or the President, exercised his authority under the Kashmir Constitution and dissolved the Legislative Assembly and further queered the pitch. V.P. Singh was greatly annoyed with Jagmohan, but did not want to recall him as that would further embolden the terrorists. He wanted my guidance in the matter.

I gave an account of my talks with Rajiv Gandhi and his team the previous night and suggested that Jagmohan must have a dialogue with local leaders, at least to show to the outside world that they were not supporting the militants. I added that the Prime Minister should continue his efforts with political parties to find a national consensus. The Prime Minister replied that the first suggestion might not work as Jagmohan was totally opposed to it, but the second would be actively pursued.

On March 7, the Prime Minister discussed the issue with political parties and it was resolved that an all-party group should visit Kashmir the next day to study the situation. Rajiv Gandhi reported his impressions to me on March 9. According to him, the people he met and saw talked about "*azadi*" (independence) and the lower grade government employees were hostile to the Governor and thus indirectly to India. His suggestions were:

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

(1) Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, the Home Minister, might replace Jagmohan as Governor, or a Cabinet Minister might be appointed as Minister in charge of Kashmir Affairs, with instructions to start a dialogue with the political leaders of Kashmir.
(2) The dissolved Assembly might be revived if legally feasible or an advisory council appointed.

I told Rajiv Gandhi that the ideas he had put forward were not mutually exclusive and that we could work out a solution by permutation and combination of these proposals.

At a wedding reception hosted by Air Chief Marshal Mehra on March 10, the Prime Minister told me that he was designating George Fernandes as Minister in charge of Kashmir Affairs also, and that discussions with party leaders were being continued.

On March 15, George Fernandes came for breakfast. He had presented the Railway Budget the previous day which was neither populist nor harsh. I complimented him on presenting a "correct" budget which, coming from me, immensely pleased him. Our talks turned to Kashmir and he gave his perception of the problem. According to his assessment, the government was not effective in the Valley; the present leaders of Kashmir, including the Governor, were not popular with the people and could not move in the Valley without police protection; and the cry for independence (*azadi*) was gaining momentum.

He suggested a dialogue with the people of the Valley, for some kind of autonomy for them. I recalled to him that as Defence Minister, I had suggested in 1983 to Indira Gandhi that Ladakh may be made a Union Territory as demanded by the local people, Jammu given the status of a State, and the Valley dealt with as a separate entity; but it did not find any

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

response. I wondered whether the idea proposed by George Fernandes would receive any consideration at all in the country. I also pointed out the possible repercussions of such a proposal in Punjab where a demand for similar status might come up and create more violence and tensions. We had a meaningful chat but found no solution. So we agreed to continue the search.

The militants struck again, kidnapping the Vice-Chancellor of Kashmir University, his private secretary and an official of Bharat Heavy Electricals. They demanded the release of three terrorists in jail and finally reduced their demand to one. The government refused to yield as it felt this would encourage the terrorists to take more and more hostages.

On April 10, the terrorists executed Khera, the BHEL official and threw his body at a lonely place in Srinagar. This sent shock waves throughout the country. The relatives of Khera castigated the government saying that in the case of Rubiya Sayeed it had conceded the demands of the terrorists, while in Khera's case it had left him to his fate.

After two weeks of consideration, the Home Minister furnished me a list of 13 new Governors which included a Congressman, Prof. D.P. Chattopadhyaya, a BJP leader, Yagya Dutt Sharma, a Telugu Desam member, Satya-narayana Reddy, Janata Dal leaders Krishna Kant, Rachiah, Dhanik Lal Mandal, Chandravati, a non-party man, C. Subramaniam, Admiral Tahiliani (former Chief of the Naval Staff) and Dr. Swarup Singh (former Vice-Chancellor, Delhi University). Among those retained were, Dr. P.C. Alexander, Khurshid Alam Khan and Gopal Singh. Nurul Hasan was transferred from Orissa to West Bengal. There was criticism in the Press that the new government was no different from the Congress government in appointing party people as Governors. There was also criticism from the Chief

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Ministers that they were not consulted before the appointments.

It was said that the National Front government had also succumbed to the temptation of rewarding or pleasing its supporters. The appointment of C. Subramaniam, whom I persuaded to accept the office, Admiral Tahiliani and Dr. Swarup Singh was, however, warmly received by the Press and the people. The choice of Governors and their transfer and termination of services will, in my opinion, remain a perpetual problem under the Constitution. So long as the power of appointment and the power of advising the President to withdraw his pleasure from a Governor, which is binding on the President, rests with the Prime Minister unfettered by any limitation, the position of Governor would remain nebulous. Unless the Constitution is amended specifying the authority of the Centre over the Governor, the political and legal confusion is bound to persist.

On March 2, I presented the colours to the Madras Sappers and Miners at Bangalore. The Madras Sappers and Miners are not only the seniormost in the Corps of Engineers but are also one of the oldest regiments in the Indian Army with a distinguished service of over 210 years. Presentation of colours is an occasion of great pride to a regiment. It is an association with the heroic deeds performed by the unit. Addressing the troops, I said that the long array of battle honours and gallantry awards would bear testimony to the courage, dedication and personal bravery of the Madras Sappers, affectionately called "Thambis". I was sure that the colours would inspire the Sappers to still greater deeds of valour in the service of the country.

In accordance with the constitutional provision that the President shall address both Houses of Parliament at the commencement of the first session of each year, I delivered

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

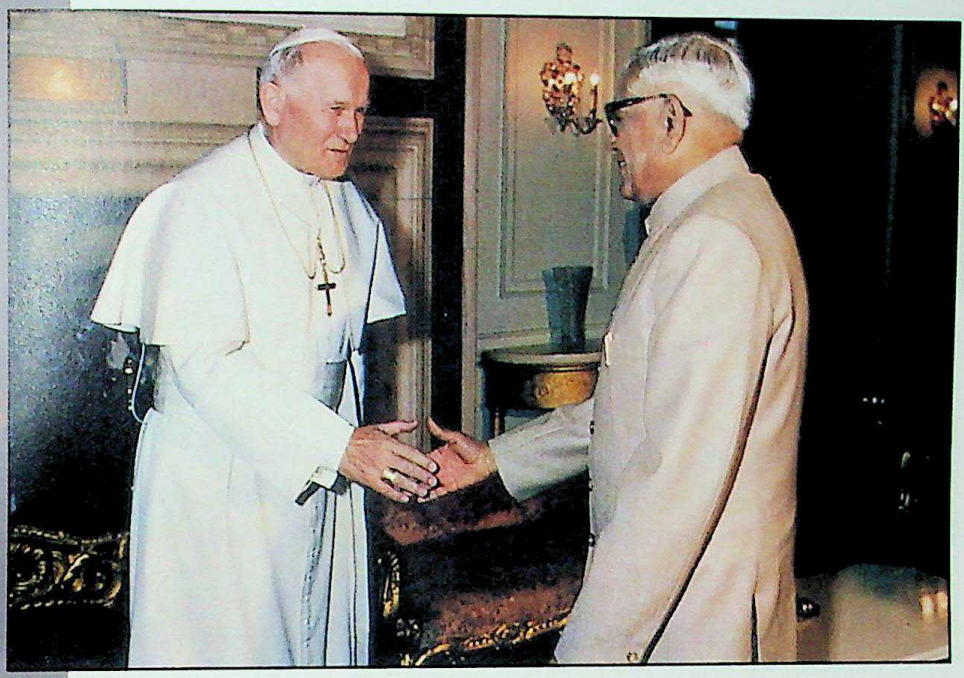
the Presidential address on March 12. The address set out the policies and programmes of the government *in extenso*. The address dealt with the financial crisis, the balance of payments problem, the government's industrial policy and its determination to control inflation. According to the practice that has developed recently, there were the usual interruptions.

That year the Nehru Award for International Understanding was conferred on the P.L.O. chief, Yasser Arafat, who had assumed the office of President of the Palestinian State. He was extended all courtesies and honours that a visiting head of state gets. At the banquet hosted in Arafat's honour, I reiterated India's firm support for the Palestinian cause as a national commitment which held good whatever the changes in government and said the commitment would remain until the Palestinian people achieved their cherished goal of an independent state. In his reply, Arafat clarified that the "Intifada" (revolt) of the Palestinian people in the areas occupied by Israel, was not based on religion but was a democratic struggle in which all people, Christians, Jews and Muslims, were involved. The visiting President hoped that a solution to the problem would be found by dialogue and negotiations.

On March 27, Arafat was presented the prestigious Nehru Award at a glittering function at Vigyan Bhavan in the presence of the Vice-President, the Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers, diplomats, academicians and the elite. Conferring the award, I said that the cause Arafat represented, the cause for which he had devoted his entire life with courage, valour, sacrifice and suffering, had the support of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. I complimented Arafat on his efforts to promote understanding in West Asia and on the spirit of accommodation displayed in the process. In his acceptance address, Arafat reaffirmed the determination of the Pales-

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu



With Pope John Paul II.

The Queen Mother, Prince Philip, Janaki and President Venkataraman and Queen Elizabeth at the State Banquet hosted by Her Majesty.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

left: President and Janaki Venkataraman with Princess Diana.

above: With Margaret Thatcher, Prime Minister of England.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

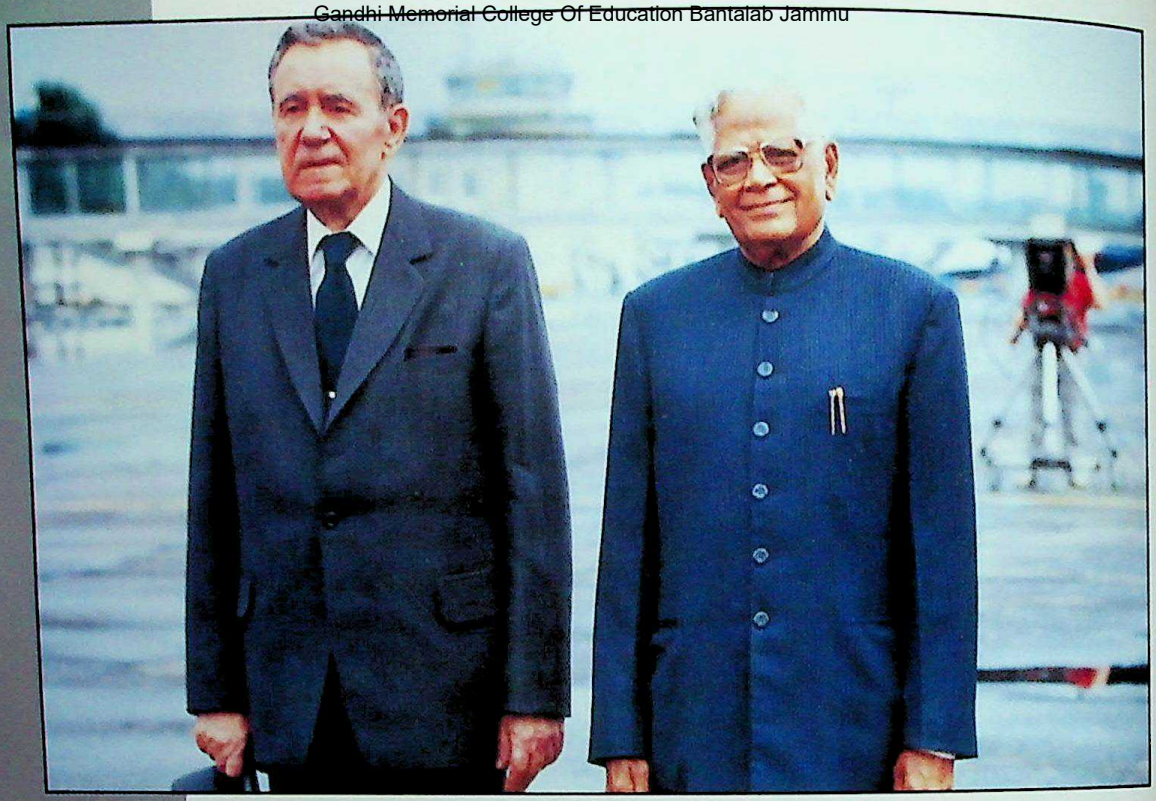
Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

left:
With Nelson Mandela.

above: At the coronation of the Emperor of Japan.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

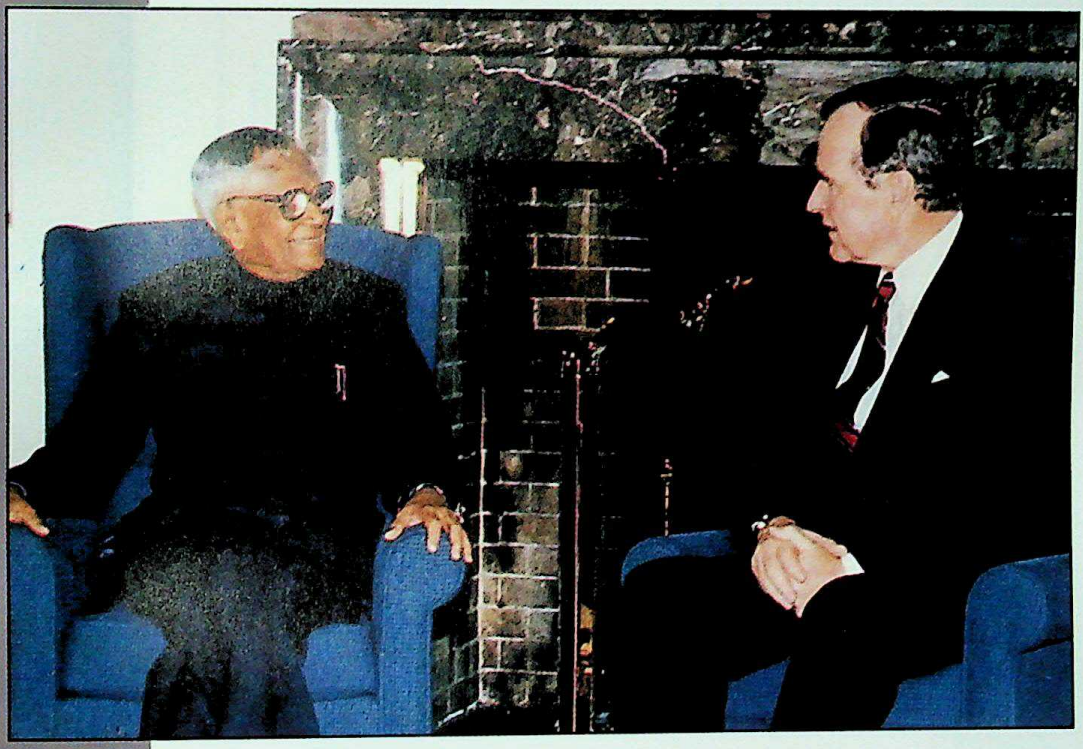


top: At Moscow Airport with President Gromykov.

below: Ceremonial reception by the Queen of Netherlands.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

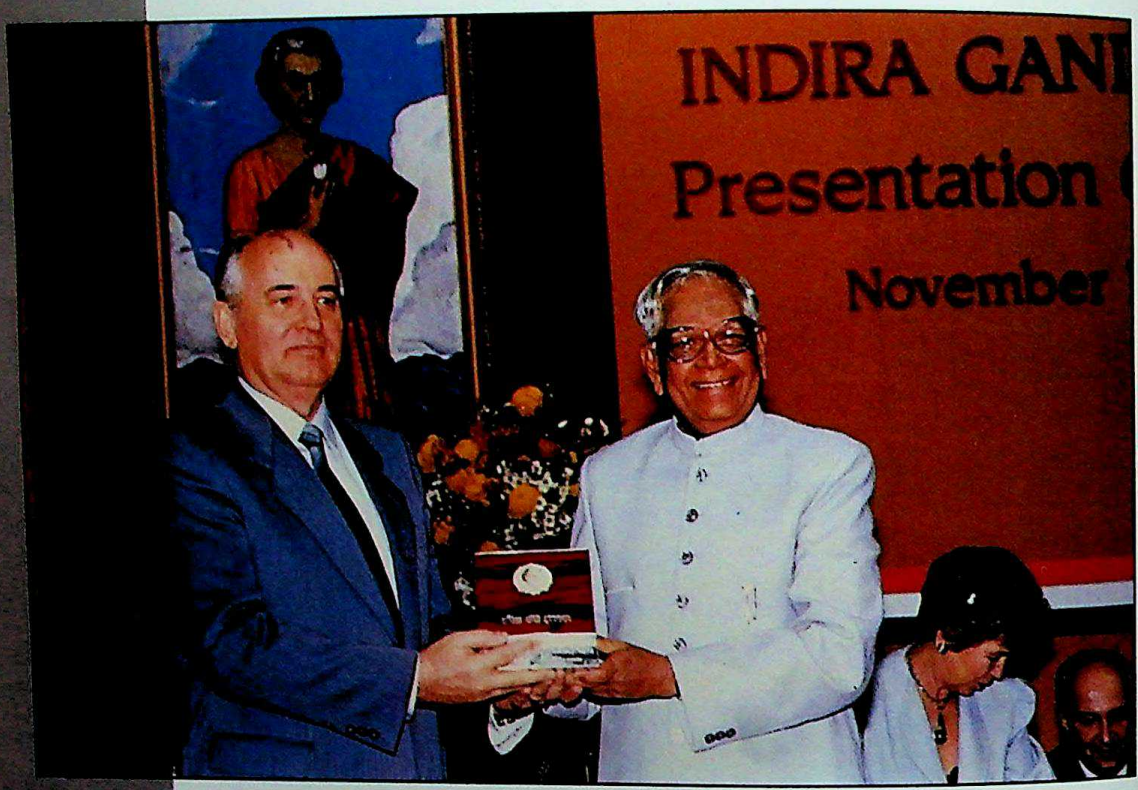
Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu



With U.S. President George Bush.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu



President Gorbachev receiving the Indira Gandhi Prize
for Peace and Disarmament.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

With Chinese Premier Li Peng.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

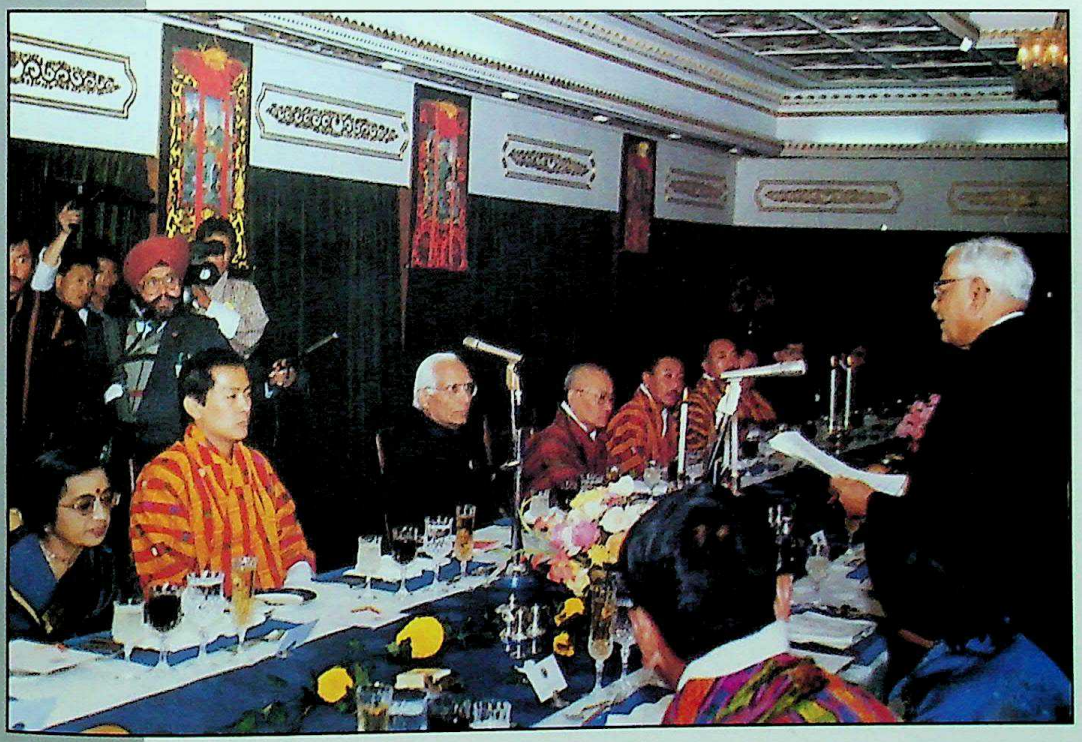
Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

left: With Hosni Mubarak.

above: With Yasser Arafat of PLO.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

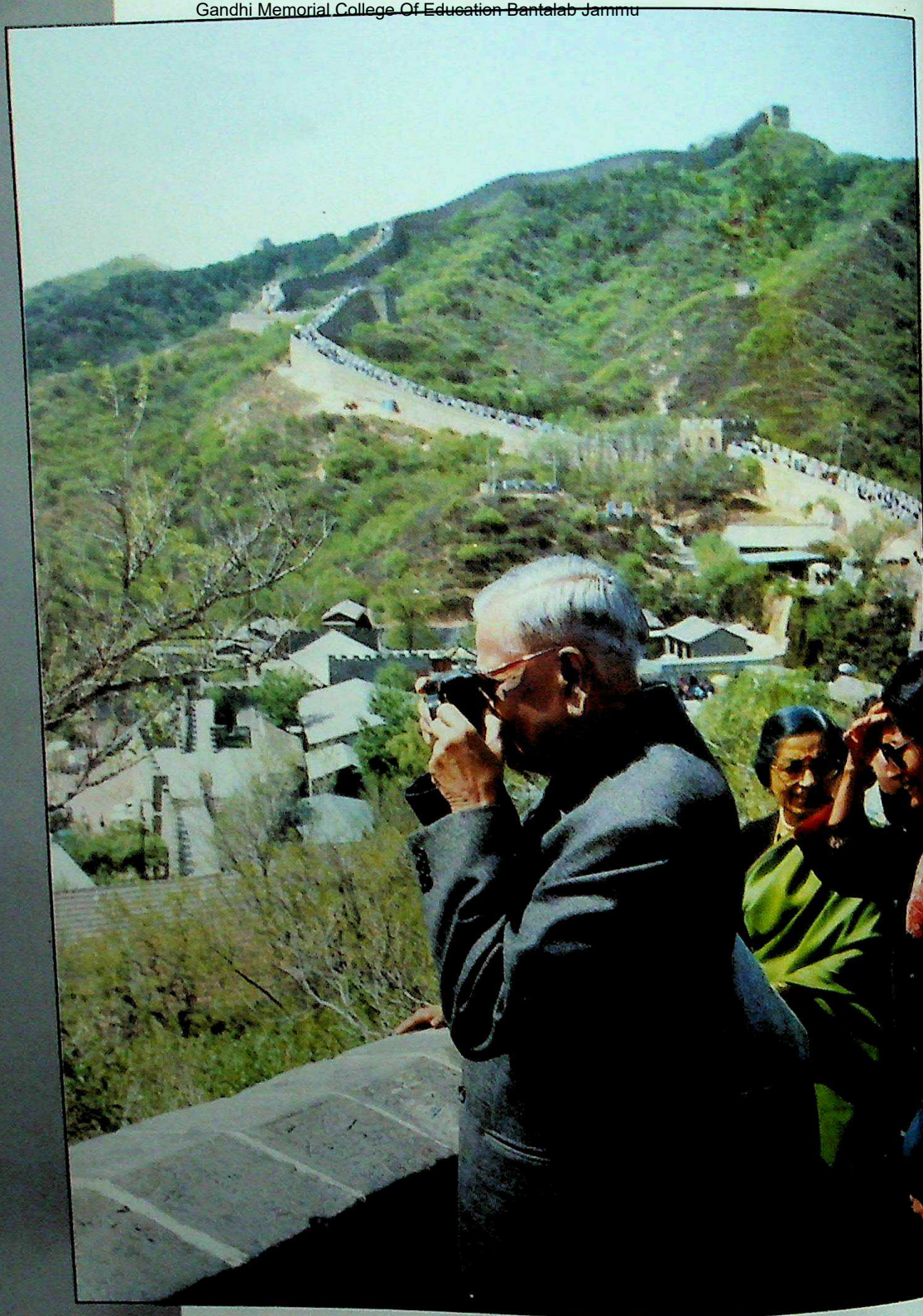


top: Ceremonial reception at Beijing by President of China.

below: State Banquet at Bhutan (1988).

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu



On the Great Wall of China.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

tinian people to achieve an independent homeland for themselves regardless of sacrifice and suffering. He paid glowing tributes to Jawaharlal Nehru for promoting Indo-Arab relations and highlighting the just cause of the Palestinian people and condemned the attempts of Israel to settle immigrant Jews from the Soviet Union in the occupied Palestinian territory. He warned that such a move would kill the peace initiatives and lead to war.

So overwhelmed was Arafat after receiving the award that he departed from all protocol and conventions and repeatedly hugged me on the stage waving enthusiastically to the cheering audience. They also responded by giving a standing ovation and raised slogans of "Long Live Indo-Arab Friendship" and "Long Live Arafat".

During my visit to Tokyo for the funeral of Emperor Hirohito, President Mario Soares of Portugal had met me and had extended an invitation to make an official visit to his country. The External Affairs Ministry welcomed the idea and arranged a state visit to that country along with similar visits to the United Kingdom and Malta in March-April 1990.

After the merger of Goa with India, there was a collapse of diplomatic relations between Portugal and India. However, when the socialists came to power in Portugal, the attitudes changed and the Indo-Portuguese Treaty of December 1974 paved the way for normalisation of relations between the two countries. Soares, as Foreign Minister of Portugal, had visited India in 1974 and laid the foundation for bilateral cooperation in trade and for economic relations.

The Indian delegation comprised Dinesh Goswami, Minister for Steel, as Minister-in-Waiting; the Secretary to the President; the Additional Secretary, External Affairs; the Ambassador to Portugal and senior officials.

On arrival in Lisbon on March 31 at 11 a.m., we were

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

received by President Soares, Madame Soares, ministers, officials, the Archbishop and members of the Indian community. Soares expressed deep appreciation of my visit, the first by an Indian President to that country. After a salute of 21 guns, I inspected a guard of honour by the elite commando group. A ceremonial reception was accorded to us at Jeronimous Monastery, a sixteenth century monument built to commemorate Vasco da Gama's voyage to India. The structure is a unique mixture of European and Indian contemporary architecture. The motif of an Indian elephant was very prominent in the monastery. I laid a wreath on the tomb of the Portuguese national poet Luis de Camoes who had lived in Goa in the second half of the sixteenth century.

Escorted by cavalry and accompanied by Soares, we drove to the Belem Palace, the office-cum-residence of the President, for official talks. The discussions were cordial and friendly, without any differences surfacing on any issue. Soares welcomed the winds of change in East Europe and hoped that the entire Europe would soon have a truly democratic system. He was distressed at the attitude of affluent nations towards the less developed countries and wanted a more equitable sharing of wealth and resources among all nations of the world. He favoured a genuine North–South dialogue for improving the living conditions and reducing the debt burden of the countries of the South. He welcomed German unity but felt that NATO troops would have to remain in West Germany till conditions became normal in Europe. Supporting Lithuania's claim for independence, he pointed out that its union with the Soviets was only forty years old and that its right to a separate existence was legitimate. At the same time he wondered how such a small country would be able to sustain itself. He thought a dialogue between Lithuanian leaders and Gorbachev could yield a satisfactory solution. He was all praise for India's

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

democratic polity, its stability and economic progress. He was deeply impressed by India's advance in science and technology and desired that it be shared with Portugal.

In my presentation, I referred to the smooth and orderly transition of power from one party to another through the democratic process of general elections and the peaceful and orderly way in which 300 million people exercised their franchise. I reiterated our national policy of solving all problems through dialogue and discussion and gave instances of our talks with Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. The overt and covert support extended by Pakistan to militants in Punjab and Kashmir was delicately brought out by me. After giving details of India's progress in agriculture, industry, technology and social welfare, I referred to the problem of access for developing countries to the markets of developed countries which, while preaching free trade to others, were themselves restricting imports through bans and quotas. In this connection I expressed our apprehension that the single Market 92, envisaged by the European Community, might become more restrictive of imports from developing countries.

Soares assured me that Portugal would champion the cause of India before the European Community and would do everything to help develop India's trade with the Community. He said, "For us Portuguese people, though our commitment to Europe is urgent, it will not make us forget our concern for a more just and balanced development in the world and a dialogue of cooperation between countries of the North and the South."

I raised the issue of the return of the gold pledged by the people of Goa with Portuguese banks before the merger. Soares warmly responded by informing me that action had already been initiated for the return of the gold jewels through the State Bank of India. I formally extended an

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

invitation to President and Madame Soares to pay a state visit to India at their earliest convenience.

The Portuguese were keen on celebrating the 500th anniversary of Vasco da Gama's landing in India not as a colonial enterprise but as the discovery of a sea route to India which brought the people of Europe closer to India and wanted a joint committee of India and Portugal for these celebrations. They also wanted to open a cultural centre in Goa to provide a platform for the interaction of Portuguese and Indian cultures. I referred these requests to the Prime Minister in my tour report. Though Portugal was a member of NATO, its approach to all international issues was liberal and progressive.

After the talks, there was a quiet family lunch with President and Madame Soares at their residence. We chatted freely about the flora and fauna, the climate, the old castles well preserved by Portugal and the carefree Portuguese way of life they had left behind in Goa. As happens during private lunches, the hosts were very curious to know about India. The presidential couple were deeply impressed by her rich cultural diversity and expressed appreciation for the way India was tackling age-old problems.

We were housed in Palacio de Queluz, a centuries-old castle with thirty steps to climb and no lift. It was a lovely place and I felt I was living four centuries back in history. I conjured up visions of ghosts waking me up in the night and telling tales of yore. We had all the exercise we needed for the day going up and down a few times.

In the afternoon, the Mayor of Lisbon who, I was told, was one of the tallest leaders of the Socialist Party, accorded us a civic reception. He talked about the old association between India and Portugal and the trade and commerce that linked the two countries. He hoped that new ties would be forged to enable commercial and cultural exchanges

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

between India and Portugal. The Mayor paid tributes to the large Indian community (of over 50,000) and their assimilation with the local community. Portugal has no colour bar or segregation laws and all people, whatever their origin, have full civil and social rights.

In my reply, I described Lisbon as one of the great cities of Europe since the thirteenth century and as one that had sent many explorers to discover the New World. Besides, Lisbon had been a great trading centre which established contacts not only with India but also with countries further east. "Mine is a return visit for the visit of Vasco da Gama to India," I said amidst cheering.

The state banquet at Palacio da Ajuda for our delegation was a colourful and grand function attended by an array of political leaders, ministers and other dignitaries. In his banquet speech, Soares praised the example set by India in preserving its democratic institutions since Independence. "India appears to our eyes as one of the giants of Asia and of the world," he observed and added that India's responsibility in South Asia was very great. Alluding to India's problems with neighbours, the President said, "I believe that the delicate situation it faces will find fair solutions through dialogue and agreement — the only way to preserve peace and development." Soares admitted that dictator Salazar's intransigence in refusing to have a dialogue with Nehru for peaceful withdrawal from Goa was wrong and said that the socialists would have voluntarily surrendered the colonies if they had been in power at that time. He went on to say that arrangements for the return of the Goans' jewels through the State Bank of India had been finalised and an announcement would be made by his government soon.

In reply, I referred to the wisdom and foresight of Jawaharlal Nehru who, during the height of the Cold War, stood steadfast for peaceful co-existence between nations

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

and through the Non-Aligned Movement helped the newly independent small nations to preserve their independence of thought and action. I dealt with India's spectacular progress in different fields saying that India today was very different from what Vasco da Gama discovered in 1498. I concluded by expressing the hope that my presence in Portugal would contribute to a qualitative upgrading of cooperation in all fields — political, economic, cultural and commercial.

On April 1, I met a large group of Indians in Lisbon. Most of them had come from Goa and Mozambique. They were mainly traders and had intermarried and integrated themselves with the local community. They complained about the inordinate delay in getting visas to visit India and wanted it to be expedited. I suggested to them to use their influence in India and in Portugal to go into industrial ventures and thereby help both their motherland and their country of adoption.

A magnificent tour along the lovely coast of Portugal had been laid out for us. Unfortunately, torrential rains confined us to our bullet-proof cars and our vision to hazy views through window panes. It appears that the Indian security officials insisted on providing bullet-proof cars for us even though the hosts protested that there were no terrorist activities in their country.

We visited the sixteenth century Castle de Pena and saw quaint old utensils, furniture and beds. We found that the beds were very short, and asked the guide why it was so. We were informed that the kings and nobles of those days had a superstition that if they slept flat, they would never get up again and so they slept in a reclining position with their heads propped up at least a feet or two high!

In the afternoon, we visited the Gulbenkian Museum which was established by Gulbenkian, who had amassed huge wealth from oil during his explorations and used it all

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

for this foundation. It has a fantastic collection of paintings, sculptures, art objects, carpets, furniture and jewellery. The director of the museum was disappointed because in the one hour allotted for this programme we could hardly see even a fraction of the exhibits.

On April 2, Prime Minister Cavaco Silva called on me. He belongs to the Social Democratic Party (Conservatives) while President Soares is the leader of the Socialist Party. Even so, they work together smoothly and efficiently. I wish India would learn a lesson in forming coalition governments from Europe, which mostly has such governments. The Prime Minister told me that India and Portugal could expand their economic and cultural contacts once the political ties were strengthened. He repeated that "my government is prepared to do everything possible to intensify ties with India". He also mentioned the decision to return the gold ornaments to the Goans.

I told the Prime Minister that India and Portugal should continue consultations on North–South dialogue, disarmament and on the creation of a democratic order in South Africa. I emphasised the view that North–South disparity could endanger peace and stability in the world. The Prime Minister said that Portugal shared our concern over the need for North–South cooperation. The talks were friendly, cordial and pleasant.

Talking to the Press after the meeting, the Prime Minister revealed that agreement to return the gold to the Goans was about to be signed. He also described my visit as "a turning point in the history of relations between the two countries".

The Palace de Quelus is an enormous building with several stately halls and chambers. I met the diplomatic corps in the grand Hall of Mirrors. After introductions I chatted informally with the diplomats. The most important subject raised was the recent elections in India and the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

smooth transfer of power despite the absence of majority for a single party. Some Commonwealth diplomats were curious about support to a government without joining a coalition. I explained that in Britain the Labour Party, despite its being a minority in 1929, carried on the government with the help of Liberals without forming a coalition and that there was no constitutional impediment to a minority government so long as it commanded the confidence of the House. Some were eager to know about our green revolution and agricultural progress. I spent a pleasant one hour with them.

The Prime Minister hosted a lunch for us at his residence which again was one of the old castles. Here too we had to climb 52 steps as there was no lift. I admired the Portuguese commitment to the preservation of their old monuments and castles and their refusal to make any structural alteration to them. The sumptuous lunch was followed by speeches by both of us.

As a supreme gesture of esteem, the National Assembly of the Republic of Portugal, even though not in session, was especially convened to enable me to address the members on April 2. It was designated as an extraordinary plenary session. The President of the Assembly gave a brief resumé of my career and repeated what almost all the Portuguese leaders had been saying ever since I landed in Lisbon — that it was an honour to receive the head of state of India — and requested me to address the House.

In my address I said: "I deem it a privilege to have this opportunity to address the special session of the Assembly of Portugal. I am thankful to you for this honour which I regard as a unique gesture of your friendship towards my country and our people."

Referring to our Constitution I highlighted that "universal adult suffrage, free elections, a representative govern-

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

ment, the rule of law, an independent judiciary, fundamental rights and freedom of the press constitute the basic structure of our Constitution" and added that these values were but a continuation of the principles of non-violence and right means adopted by us during our freedom struggle. I reminded that "India was not only the largest democracy but also one of the healthiest and most vibrant democracies in the world." After recounting our achievements in food self-sufficiency, industrial development and advances in science and technology, I detailed the great strides that India had made "in computers, nuclear power plants, oceanography, space research, genetic engineering and biotechnology". I referred to the successful launch of a communications satellite with our own solid fuel-propelled launch vehicle and the remote sensing satellite developed by ourselves. The members looked visibly impressed when I claimed that India was "one of the handful of countries in the world which can maintain the full nuclear fuel cycle from refining of the ore to the reprocessing of the waste". I concluded by saying: "I am no prophet to foresee the future. But if, as a student of history, reasonable forecast may be attempted, I am confi-dent that the current world trends and events clearly point towards a new world of human happiness and prosperity, if only the present generation takes the right path at the crossroads at which we stand." The speech was greeted with a standing ovation lasting a few minutes.

That night when I gave a return dinner to the President and Madame Soares, most of the talk at the table was about the several points I had made in the speech.

On the morning of April 3, there was a friendly and affectionate farewell. Soares, responding to my invitation to visit India, said that he would schedule his programme as early as possible.

It was quite evident that there was a great euphoria in

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Portugal over my visit. Almost every newspaper commented favourably on the outcome of our talks and discussions. The decision by the Portuguese government to return the Goan gold was hailed by the public as an appropriate and honourable step. I myself felt that the Socialist government was genuinely prepared to return it at the earliest opportunity without raising legal and other obstacles. I am not aware of such a gesture by any government in history. A leading newspaper *Diario de Noticias* summed up the visit in the following terms (free translation furnished to me):

"The balance of the very first visit of an Indian President to the Republic of Portugal is frankly positive .... The visit came to add a fresh impetus to relations between Portugal and India .... Now that the paths have been cleared and the return of the jewels to their legitimate owners agreed to, there is every indication that the relationship between the two countries will, from now on, enter a phase of total clarification and cordial understanding. The old imperial fancies have been well buried, not merely driven away.

"India's position of leadership in favour of the emancipation of the peoples and peaceful resolution of international conflicts is a factor that cannot and should not be ignored. After all, it is the point which establishes a common identity between India and modern Portugal .... As the distinguished visitor himself said, his country and our, both represent forces which are committed to democracy.

"Five centuries after the arrival of Vasco da Gama at Calicut, Venkataraman came to Lisbon. More than the President of a friendly nation, and to use his own words, he came to us to 'return the visit his people had received all those centuries ago'. He arrived opportunely — in favour of closer brotherly ties between these two peoples."

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

24

Twenty-seven years after the state visit of Dr. Radhakrishnan in 1963, the United Kingdom extended an invitation to the President of India to make an official visit. The Queen entertains only two foreign dignitaries in a year and therefore many countries do not get a chance to pay official visits to the United Kingdom during a monarch's regime. The U.K. had made elaborate arrangements for our reception at Victoria Station where we were scheduled to arrive by the royal train from Gatwick Airport. A guard of honour by the Grenadier Guards, the Household Cavalry and a long line of vehicles including horse-drawn royal coaches were all kept in readiness. The Prince of Wales and Princess Diana were waiting at the station to receive the Indian guests, while rows of people lined the route to have a glimpse of the procession. Newspapers reported that £85,000 had been spent on all these arrangements.

When we landed at Gatwick Airport on April 3, we were received by the Duke and Duchess of Kent. They informed us that a "Suspicious Bag" was discovered on the railway track and the security people had advised against our travelling by the royal train but take the road route instead. A guard of honour by the Queen's Guards, which had been kept ready as a fall-back arrangement, was presented and the party left by road straight to Buckingham Palace. During the drive, the Duke of Kent mentioned that the security people did not want to take a risk, especially because of the Khalistan

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

agitation, and expressed regret for the inconvenience. I put him at ease by saying that we too had shifted ceremonial receptions for foreign dignitaries from the airport to the forecourt of Rashtrapati Bhavan.

At the Buckingham Palace we were received warmly by the Queen and Prince Philip, the Prince and Princess of Wales and some members of the Royal Family. The Prime Minister, who had arrived at Victoria Station to greet us, returned when she was informed of the change of programme. We were then ushered to our rooms. Buckingham Palace has a drab exterior but the moment one steps in, one gets a feeling of being in one of the ancient palaces described in literature. The elegant stairs, polished railings, red carpet, antique furniture, centuries-old paintings decorating the walls, the silver and china, bewilder the visitor. The palace is spick and span and exudes an atmosphere of taste and elegance.

We had a quiet family lunch with the Queen and Prince Philip and the Duke and Duchess of Kent. I recalled to Prince Philip that during his visit to Madras in 1961, I had been the minister-in-waiting for him and had escorted him to a number of places including the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills. The Queen said she remembered that visit as it was her first tour of India and it had left a deep impression on her. The Moghul Garden in Rashtrapati Bhavan in Delhi has more than one hundred varieties of roses, and one of these is named Queen Elizabeth. I had arranged for a bunch of these roses to be flown to London and presented them to the Queen. We also presented these rose plants to Buckingham Palace in reciprocation of the rose plants named Mountbatten presented to us by the British High Commissioner, Sir David Goodall, in New Delhi. During the exchange of gifts, we presented a silk brocade dress material and a pale coloured carpet and the Queen reciprocated with a silver

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

bowl, which I added to the Rashtrapati Bhavan collection along with others.

At 4.30 p.m. we went to the renowned Westminster Abbey where kings, poets and celebrities are buried. After laying a wreath at the tomb of the Unknown Soldier in a simple ceremony, we went round and saw the tombs of King Edward, Mary Queen of Scotts, Byron the poet, and other well-known figures in history. I remembered Gray's elegy:

> 'The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power
> And all that beauty, all that wealth ever gave,
> Await alike the inevitable hour,
> The paths of glory lead but to the grave.'

Here was history epitomised in one building and here lay the moulders of destiny of their times. Thereafter we went to St. James's Palace where we received an address of welcome from the Lord Mayor and Councillors of the City of Westminster.

My wife and I paid a call on the Queen Mother at her residence, Clarence House. A 90-year-old lady with all faculties intact — seeing without spectacles, hearing perfectly without aid, walking steadily without a stick — she was a marvel. She exuded kindness, friendliness and affection. She herself made tea for us and refused our offer of help. She said that she had never visited India and that her programme of a visit to India with George VI had to be cancelled as the clouds of World War II had gathered at that time. In her presence we felt we were meeting a senior member of the family. Later when I told the Queen about our visit to her mother, the Queen said her mother maintained an enviable state of health and attended to most things herself.

The same night, the Queen and Prince Philip hosted a grand banquet for us at the Buckingham Palace. The invitees included members of the Royal Family, the Prime Minister

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

and members of the Cabinet, diplomatic representatives, Members of Parliament and prominent citizens. It was perhaps the largest banquet I had attended.

The Queen in her address warmly praised India's progress, its political maturity and the expanding trade between the two countries. Alluding to the misgivings in the developing countries of a possible diversion of aid and assistance to the East European countries in the changing context in Europe, the Queen dispelled doubts by categorically stating that there was no intention of reducing constructive assistance to India. Referring to the mutual exchanges between Britain and India in several fields apart from trade and commerce, the Queen said to the surprise of the audience, that over 900 words in the Oxford English Dictionary came directly from India. The Queen praised the role of the Commonwealth and the contribution of the Indian community in Britain to the economic activities in the country.

In my reply I recalled that the leaders of our freedom movement had imbibed modern ideas of self-government, democracy and secularism from British scholars, writers and thinkers and naturally adopted the system of parliamentary democracy when freedom came to our country. After nine successful general elections on the basis of adult franchise extended to 500 million people, one could no longer talk of a democratic experiment in India but must acknowledge the democratic expertise developed in our country, I asserted.

I referred to the release of Nelson Mandela as a first step towards democratisation of the regime in South Africa and that comprehensive sanctions should be maintained against that country. I added that "it is too early to relax pressure on the Pretoria regime by lifting comprehensive economic sanctions." It may be remembered that Britain was reluctant to impose sanctions on South Africa because of economic

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

considerations and only when it found that it was in a minority of one against 48 at the Commonwealth meeting, that Britain introduced sanctions.

After the release of Nelson Mandela and the lifting of the ban on the African National Congress, Britain unilaterally dropped three of its sanctions. My reference to the premature relaxation of sanctions raised several eyebrows at the dinner. *The Times* of London stated, "His remarks at a state banquet at Buckingham Palace were seen as an implicit rebuke to the government which dropped three of its sanctions...." It also said: "His move was a surprise, as the President is not a political figure and had been expected to avoid controversy." This view was not shared by many. The Leader of the Opposition, Neil Kinnock, who met me later, complimented me on my reference to Mandela and the sanctions. He said that he was inclined to cheer me at that time but restrained himself because of the convention that no one claps during speeches at the monarch's banquet. It was typically British for even a radical to observe royal conventions.

Contrary to the briefing about protocol-ridden procedures at Buckingham Palace, the Queen and members of the Royal Family talked freely and without officious formality on everything, from roses to rugby. The solemnity and dignity of the banquet left a deep impression on me.

On April 4, several British leaders made official calls on me. Shridath Ramphal, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth and an old and good friend who was the first to meet me, spoke of the effective role of the Commonwealth on the issue of imposing sanctions on South Africa and expressed warm appreciation of my reference to Nelson Mandela and to relaxation of sanctions by the U.K. He said that after 15 years of service as Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, he was demitting office in July. He expressed his deep admiration for Nehru who had helped the Commonwealth

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

gain strength and influence during the formative years of its existence.

A reception to the diplomatic corps stationed in London was arranged at St. James's Palace. The royal coach with mounted guards took me from Buckingham Palace. As the coach started moving, the Queen came out on the balcony of her apartments and waved to me — a touching gesture of regard and friendship. The U.K. has the largest number of diplomatic missions representing 160 countries. Almost the entire diplomatic corps had turned up. Precedence in introduction was given to the High Commissioners from the Commonwealth countries followed by ambassadors from other countries according to seniority and then the *charge d'affaires*. The ceremony of introduction took half an hour and thereafter we mingled with the diplomats. Nothing much of significance was said during this noisy clatter of glasses. As I returned in procession to Buckingham Palace, people gathered on the roadsides cheered and clapped. I was not sure if the people came to see the royal coach or its occupant.

The next programme, namely, talks and lunch with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher at 10 Downing Street, was the central event of the day. The Prime Minister said she had met me a few times earlier when I was Finance Minister and then Defence Minister and extended a cordial welcome. Pointing to the Cabinet Room she mentioned that the decision to grant freedom to India was taken in that room. The Cabinet Room was a dull one without ornate furniture, fittings or even any famous British paintings.

In my presentation to the British Prime Minister I thanked the Queen and the Government of the United Kingdom for their warm welcome and gracious hospitality. I said that more than 300 million people had voted in the last general elections, which, barring a few incidents of violence,

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

were free and fair and the smooth transition of power from the ruling party to the opposition was a testimony to the deep-rooted democratic values in our country. The Prime Minister was baffled by the figure 300 million. When I mentioned that India had three million scientists and technologists, the third largest in the world, Mrs. Thatcher gasped and said, " You beat us."

Dealing with the sensitive issues of Kashmir and Punjab, I condemned Pakistan's support to terrorists in Kashmir and Punjab and informed her that incontrovertible evidence of terrorists getting training in arms and taking shelter across the border after committing crimes in India had been furnished to Pakistan through diplomatic channels.

I pointed out that the U.N. Security Council resolution regarding a plebiscite in Kashmir had become infructuous as the condition precedent thereto, namely, withdrawal of all foreign forces from occupied areas, had not been implemented by Pakistan. Moreover, several general elections had been held in Kashmir and members had been elected to the national Parliament. In any event, I asserted that the Simla agreement had provided that all differences between the two countries should be settled bilaterally through negotiations and discussions.

At this stage Mrs. Thatcher intervened to express her concern at the growing tide of terrorism and fundamentalism all over the world.

I seized the opportunity to point out that India was a secular democratic state and could not agree to the formation of a state on the basis of religion. I pointed out that there were 100 million Muslims in India living in peace and harmony with people of other religions and asked what would happen to them if one accepted the principle of formation of states on the basis of religion. I drew attention to our consistent policy in this regard when in Sri Lanka we sent our army to protect

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

its unity and integrity notwithstanding the fact that it was ethnic Indians who wanted a separate state. I called for global action against terrorism and denounced the granting of asylum to terrorists by any country.

During lunch, Mrs. Thatcher warmly welcomed the growing trade and other relations between India and Britain and hoped that larger investments would flow into India. She expressed interest in my suggestion for international action against terrorism. She also realised that the menace of fundamentalism could retard friendly international relations. Britain was tightening its control over militants and was preventing them from using the U.K. as their base and a separate cell had been created to monitor their activities, she said. The lunch was attended by the Deputy Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister, Cabinet Ministers and a large number of distinguished politicians.

In the afternoon Sir Geoffrey Howe, an old friend and my contemporary as Finance Minister, paid a call. He later became the Foreign Secretary and was now Deputy Prime Minister. A charming and friendly person, quite competent in every one of the offices he held, I was told that though he was the Deputy Prime Minister, he was not in the running for the office of Prime Minister if there was to be a change in leadership.

Next I met Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd, a sedate, dignified figure, who made me speak more while he himself talked less. He wanted to know my reactions to the changing political climate in Europe, particularly in Lithuania. I stated that India welcomed Perestroika and the political liberalisation inside the Soviet Union and wanted Gorbachev to succeed in the great task he had undertaken. In my view, if Gorbachev failed it would not be the radicals who would come to power but the old Stalinist oppressors. While not denying the right of Lithuania to its separate identity, I

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

pointed out that the matter could be negotiated with Gorbachev and a peaceful solution found. Likewise India had always been in favour of a unified Germany but the problem of coalescing two totally different economic systems had to be worked out by the German people themselves.

Hurd shared my views regarding Perestroika and added that Britain was encouraging the democratic trends in the Soviet Union. While recognising the right to freedom, he said the size of Lithuania and its total economic dependence on the Soviet Union made it necessary for Lithuania to work out a solution with the Soviet Union by dialogue and discussion. Hurd was hopeful that the Single Market 92 would be achieved and said the ongoing talks with EFTA countries would take a little time for final conclusion. He allayed India's apprehension about its trade with the EEC after the expanded market came into being and gave the assurance that Britain would take care of it.

I raised with Hurd the position of people of Indian origin in Hong Kong who faced the risk of becoming stateless after the transfer of the colony to China in 1997. The Thatcher government had not given any assurance to the Hong Kong Indians about their admission to Britain even though Opposition leader Kinnock had promised Hong Kong Indians the right of residence in Britain and eventually British nationality if Labour came to power. The Foreign Secretary did not commit himself on this issue except using the customary official phrase "that the matter would receive careful consideration."

Kinnock was the next caller. He had met me earlier in India and exchanged views with me. He was ebullient and full of confidence and spoke as if he had the next Prime Ministership of England in his pocket. He shared India's perceptions on issues of apartheid, relaxation of sanctions against South Africa, majority rule in South Africa and for

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

unrestricted admission of Hong Kong Indians and their eventual absorption as British subjects.

In the evening our High Commissioner Kuldip Nayar hosted a reception for the Indian community. A very large cross-section of the Indian community, a number of members of the British Parliament and eminent journalists attended the function.

Later that evening the Lord Mayor of London hosted a civic reception at the historic Guild Hall. The Guild Hall had witnessed in the past the trial of traitors, clamourers for reform, receptions to emperors and other heads of state — both scenes of protest as well as joyous acclaim. It was this city's merchants who were granted a royal charter to start the East India Company in 1600. Prime Minister Nehru, President Radhakrishnan, and Prime Ministers Indira Gandhi and Morarji Desai had earlier been accorded Guild Hall receptions.

The Mayor, the aldermen and I went in a procession and took our seats on the high chairs. One alderman moved that an address be presented to the President of India and it was duly seconded and adopted. The address was then read and handed over to me by the Lord Mayor. I made a short formal reply. Then another councillor moved that the address and the reply be entered into the records and it was formally adopted. Thereafter the procession left in the reverse order.

This ceremony was followed by a grand banquet. The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester and a large number of British aristocracy, members of the House of Commons, members of the diplomatic corps and officials of the Foreign Office were present. The Mayor proposed a toast, in the course of which he extolled Indo-British connections and relationships. He talked of the historic links forged and developed over centuries and the influence each country exerted on the other.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

In my reply I recalled that the first contact between India and Britain was not through the government but by the merchants of London who started the East India Company. Devoting the greater part of my speech to trade and economic matters, I talked about economic liberalisation and underlined the need for an effective dialogue on international economic relations for an equitable share for developing countries in the global trade.

Wishing to pay a compliment to the City of London, I departed from my written text and told the audience a story which I feel is worth repeating, if only to interrupt the monotony of speeches "... Shakespeare regrettably ended the play Romeo and Juliet as a tragedy where both Romeo and Juliet died. I have an amended version of the same story. In my version only Romeo dies. So grief-stricken and disconsolate is Juliet that she languishes almost to death. Some friends suggest to Juliet that she may have recourse to a seance with the spirit of Romeo and derive some consolation. At the seance, Romeo speaks to her and a delighted Juliet plies him with questions about his health, food, recreation and his surroundings. Romeo replies 'Ah Juliet, I am in a wonderful place with plenty to eat, there are flowers in bloom, companions to enliven time, there's music, dance and theatres all day and night....' Juliet thinks Romeo is in heaven and exclaims, 'Oh! Romeo, heaven should be a wonderful place.' Romeo snaps back, 'Who said that I was in heaven. I am in the City of London.' "

A thunderous applause greeted the story and newspapers wrote that the story brought the roof down of the Guild Hall. The Duchess of Gloucester who was sitting next to me said she wondered how I was going to conclude the story when she suddenly realised the veiled compliment to the city of London.

The next day was spent sightseeing. We left by the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

luxurious royal train used by the Queen from Paddington to Bath. The train was a moving palace complete with bed, baths, lounge and kitchen. This was the train I was scheduled to travel by from Gatwick Airport to Victoria Station on my arrival. We spent some time going round the baths built in the days of Roman Empire and saw hot springs and relics of the Roman period. After lunch with the mayor of Bath we drove through the countryside, in bright sunshine in cool and pleasant weather. We spent a few minutes in Chew Lake, a beauty spot used mainly by people for leisurely fishing. The royal train took us back from Bristol to London.

That night I hosted a return banquet for the Queen at St. James's Palace. We had made elaborate preparations to make it a memorable event. Exotic fruits like mangoes, pomegranates and chikoos, were flown in from India. The Bombay Taj Group, which runs the St. James Court Hotel, wanted to outdo the Claridges Hotel where such banquets are usually held. The Edwardian Hall used for the banquet was tastefully decorated with oriental motifs and gold cutlery glittered on the dining table. The menu was attractively displayed and the menu card carried a water-colour painting of Rashtrapati Bhavan, drawn by the British High Commissioner, Sir David Goodall.

The entire Royal Family responded to the invitation. The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh, Princess Margaret, the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester and Kent, the Prince and Princess of Wales, besides members of the Cabinet, diplomats and high-ranking officials attended.

At the banquet, there was an exquisite sitar recital by maestro Ravi Shankar for about 45 minutes before we adjourned for dinner. Yehudi Menuhin, the internationally reputed violinist who attended the dinner, wrote that Ravi Shankar excelled himself. "I persume the august presence of the Queen and the Royal Family inspired him," he said. The

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

food served was so nice and so different that almost everybody went into ecstasy in its praise. The Queen described it as a "colourful evening" while Prince Philip said that the "*Dosa* (rice pancake) was excellent."

The speeches delivered at the banquet were a rehash of what was said earlier, of course clothed in different phraseology, but the conversation with the Queen during the banquet proved interesting. She referred to the smooth transition of power from one party to another and said it showed the political maturity of India. I asked Her Majesty whether she had ever faced a situation in which no party had secured an absolute majority and the Crown had to make a choice of the Prime Minister. The Queen replied in the negative. However, she said that early in her career, when Conservatives had two candidates for the Prime Ministership, she had exercised her choice in favour of one. The Queen added that such a situation would no longer arise as the Conservative Party had since adopted the practice of electing a leader and submitting the name to the Crown. In reply to my query about the nature of talks at the weekly meetings with the Prime Minister, the Queen said she did not voluntarily advise the Prime Minister nor did the Prime Minister seek her advice on any matter relating to the administration. At these weekly meetings, she said the Prime Minister briefed her on various things that had been done since the last meeting.

The Queen then asked me about my relations with the Prime Minister. I explained that apart from meetings scheduled once a fortnight with Rajiv Gandhi and once a week with V.P. Singh, the Prime Ministers, because of their close personal relations with me, met me frequently and discussed several matters relating to policy issues and appointment of Governors and other constitutional functions. Sometimes, Prime Ministers had called on me with just

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

half an hour's notice. I clarified that apart from offering comments, I always left matters to the decision of the Prime Minister. I had an impression from Her Majesty's expression that her meetings with Margaret Thatcher were more formal and nothing like mine with the Prime Ministers. The Queen and her entourage left after a very pleasant and enjoyable stay of over three hours with us.

In the morning of April 6, the Queen and Prince Philip met us at the Grand Hall and walked down to the foyer. Here photographs were taken. Then they shook hands with each member of my family and bade good-bye. On April 7 we were seen off at Heathrow Airport by the British protocol. There was a general impression that the British responded favourably to India's stand on Kashmir and on terrorism and that British interest in investment in India had visibly improved. Above all, the great personal understanding and rapport established between the leaders of the two countries were a positive result of our visit.

We arrived at Luga airport, Malta, at 4 p.m. and were warmly received by President Tabone and Madame Tabone. The Prime Minister, Fienech Adami, his Cabinet colleagues and other dignitaries were introduced to us. There was the usual 21 gun salute and a guard of honour. We stayed in San Anton Palace where the President and family also lived. As in Portugal, we had to climb a number of steps to reach our rooms.

Soon after arrival Prime Minister Adami called on me. During the earlier visit to India along with Tabone, who was then Foreign Minister, Adami had met me and exchanged views. He is a well-informed articulate person and spoke of the changes sweeping over East Europe as a strong wind blowing out many undemocratic policies and practices, ushering in a common way of life in Europe. He was sanguine about Malta's admission to the European Community

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

and the prosperity this would bring to it. He wanted that Air-India should use Malta as a landing port between London and Delhi and Malta's ship repair facilities utilised more by India. He also wanted that India should open a permanent mission in Malta instead of covering it from Libya. I explained to the Prime Minister our position regarding Kashmir and our relations with our neighbours. On the Kashmir issue, Adami said it should be settled bilaterally and appreciated our role in Sri Lanka.

President Tabone hosted a glittering banquet for us at Valletta Palace in which Ministers, party leaders and the elite of Malta participated. Tabone highlighted that my visit was the first by the head of state of India and expressed confidence that it would strengthen the ties between the two countries. In my reply, I announced the decision to set up a resident diplomatic mission in Malta which greatly cheered the Maltese government and people. The rest of the address related to the changes in Europe, need for a North–South dialogue, our relations with our neighbours and the situation in South Africa. I alluded to the role India played in the United Nations in the decolonisation of Malta and to my own intervention in 1959 in the discussions on Malta in the U.N. Committee. I concluded by inviting Tabone to pay a state visit to India.

There was utmost friendliness between the hosts and our delegation and the informality gave an impression that it was a meeting of old friends. Tabone had the image of a father figure with a face beaming with friendliness and benevolence while Madame Tabone chatted freely about domestic matters. During her visit to India in 1989, she was deeply impressed by the use of solar cookers in villages and so my wife presented her a solar cooker during this visit. The children of Tabone took a liking for my daughters and were with them most of the time. So affectionate were they that

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

they kissed each other several times at the time of our departure. It looked to us as if it was a family reunion rather than a state visit to Malta.

One of the most beautiful national harbours of the world is Malta's Grand Harbour. During our tour of the harbour, we saw relics of the old Roman Empire, mansions of the Knights of St. John and modern mechanical handling and other facilities. Malta has the best ship repair shop and was contemplating opening an office in India to look for orders for Indian ship repairs.

In the afternoon we visited Cathedral Medina where we were received by the Archbishop of Malta. The museum attached to the cathedral has a fantastic collection of rare objects dating back to the Neolithic age. One can trace the growth of civilisation by going round the museum. As we came out, a number of waiting visitors cheered us with friendly warmth. The same night, I gave a return banquet to Malta's President where the speeches were more or less repeated.

On April 9 we visited the free port zone equipped with up-to-date container terminal and oil tanker facilities. The port authorities welcomed India to use the free port facilities for trade with Europe. We also saw a film on Malta's history and development. Prime Minister Adami entertained us to lunch at his residence, another old castle.

The Knights of St. John ruled over Malta for 600 years and have left a marvellous cathedral. So many additions had been made to the original cathedral that it is now a meandering collection of several centuries. We also saw the ruins of a temple of the Neolithic age called Harage Qim Temple, reputed to have been built in 3500 B.C.

India won the hearts of the Government and people of Malta by its decision to upgrade diplomatic ties through the establishment of a resident diplomatic mission in Malta. It

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

was regarded as a demonstration of the importance India attached to the relations with Malta. It was further decided to set up a joint commission so that vigorous action may be pursued for enhancing trade and economic relations. Malta had already placed orders for Maruti cars, Mahindra jeeps and BHEL boilers for its power stations and wanted greater reciprocity from India. Malta supported the Non-Aligned Movement in its demand for a more equitable global economic system, a North–South dialogue as also the emphasis on greater South–South cooperation.

Amidst scenes of euphoria over our visit, talks and discussions, we bade farewell to Malta after the usual ceremonials.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

25

On April 14, there was an elegant ceremony at Rashtrapati Bhavan for conferring the Bharat Ratna on Baba Saheb Ambedkar in recognition of his invaluable services to the country. Despite the passage of time since Dr. Ambedkar died, his popularity has not diminished and the award was welcomed universally.

On May 6, I inaugurated the new building of the Indian Society for International Law of which Judge R.S. Pathak of the International Court of Justice was the President. Speaking on the occasion, I said that the objective of international law was the establishment of peace with justice in the world. It is the law of transition from anarchy to organised world community. I recalled that we were moving, if somewhat slowly, to the achievement of these ideals. This could be seen from the rapidity with which apartheid was crumbling in South Africa, human rights were increasingly recognised and global action taken against the barbarous practice of hijacking. I called on lawyers engaged in the pursuit of international law to come up with measures to combat international terrorism and against offering asylum to terrorists from other countries.

On May 10, I unveiled a portrait of the late Gopal Swaroop Pathak, an eminent lawyer and jurist and former Vice-President of India, in the premises of the Allahabad

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

High Court. In pre-Independence days, Allahabad had produced outstanding lawyers and jurists such as Motilal Nehru, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Kailash Nath Katju, and Gopal Swaroop Pathak belonged to the same category. I referred to Pathak's deep erudition and his felicity of expression. I recalled my association with him when we worked together as members of the Indian delegation to the United Nations for a number of years and the invaluable contribution he made to the work of the delegation. I said his mastery of international law and conventions was a great asset while participating in the acrimonious debates in the United Nations. As a lawyer, Pathak maintained the highest traditions of the bar and set standards for others to emulate. I hoped that the portrait would inspire the younger generation to follow his example.

In a bid to suppress the militant activity, Governor Jagmohan resorted to very harsh measures using para-military forces in Kashmir. Despite official reports giving details of militants captured or shot dead and cache of weapons recovered from them, the militants struck again and again killing a large number of innocents. Hence curfew had to be clamped for eight days continuously in Srinagar in May 1990. This caused untold misery to the people. Since wage-earners could not go out and earn a living and the well-to-do also could not go out to buy anything, there was total alienation of the entire population of Srinagar from both the Kashmir and Central governments. This caused a furore in Parliament and attracted criticism not only from the Kashmir, but from other states as well.

George Fernandes, as Minister in charge of Kashmir Affairs, was pursuing a policy of reconciliation with the militants and was meeting some of them clandestinely. Jagmohan on the other hand was resorting to a policy of suppression and therefore was annoyed with Fernandes.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

In this atmosphere of bitterness and rancour, the militants assassinated, on May 21, one of the respected leaders of Kashmir, Moulvi Farook. It was said that Moulvi Farook was in touch with George Fernandes and was responding to the reconciliation approach propounded by the latter and therefore the militants removed him from the scene. Since Moulvi Farook was a popular leader, there was great resentment against his assassination and the people's anger reached uncontrollable levels over the dastardly crime.

A fitting funeral procession was organised for the Moulvi. It was said that some militants had infiltrated the ranks of mourners and started creating trouble during the procession. The CRPF, which was in great strength, immediately opened fire killing a large number of people. This violent incident touched off more criticism from the CPI and other political parties and an acrimonious debate followed in Parliament. While the BJP members defended the firm measures against the militants and terrorists by Jagmohan, other parties condemned the Governor for unleashing "a reign of terror" and repression in the valley. They said that the Governor had turned "a paradise on earth into a valley of hell." There was a strong plea for withdrawing Jagmohan from Kashmir. The Congress, headed by Rajiv Gandhi, launched a virulent attack on Prime Minister V.P. Singh in Parliament.

I was in Simla on my usual sojourn when the Parliament debates were going on. The Prime Minister rang me up saying that he was withdrawing Jagmohan from Kashmir and appointing Girish Saxena, former chief of RAW, as Governor in his place. The Prime Minister also said that he was withdrawing Governor Nirmal Mukherji, a former Cabinet Secretary, from Punjab and recommending Yashwant Sinha, Member of Parliament, as Governor instead. He

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

apologised for not being able to consult me earlier on these proposals in view of the hectic discussions going on in Parliament. I agreed to the changes and asked the Prime Minister to send these proposals through my office in Delhi.

The next day, only one proposal regarding Kashmir reached me. I learnt that Yashwant Sinha had declined the office of Punjab Governor. The Kashmir proposal consisted of three parts:

(1) acceptance of the resignation of Governor Jagmohan;
(2) appointment of Saxena as Governor; and
(3) nomination of Jagmohan by the President as member of the Rajya Sabha.

The last part of the proposal was not even mentioned to me by V.P. Singh. I accepted the first two parts and minuted that the third may wait for some time. I wanted to discuss this matter with the Prime Minister as I felt that such a nomination would be criticised from several angles. When this was reported to the Prime Minister, he called me again at Simla and said Jagmohan's nomination to the Rajya Sabha was part of the arrangement and that he would like the proposal to be accepted immediately. I explained to V.P. Singh my regard for the competence, efficiency and ability of Jagmohan but nominating him in the present context would be incongruous and asked the Prime Minister to reconsider the matter.

Next morning, the Prime Minister sent a message that the Cabinet had already considered the matter and had approved this proposal. Having performed my constitutional function of advising the Prime Minister, I assented to the nomination. As I expected, there was a lot of criticism of the nomination from all quarters.

On May 28, George Fernandes met me at Simla and

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

briefed me on his perception of the developments in Kashmir. He was unhappy that the efforts he had made to establish contact with the militant groups and win them over for a dialogue had been frustrated and felt that the situation would worsen after the CRPF "outrage" during the funeral procession of Moulvi Farook. I found that within six months of assuming office, grumblings had started within the National Front government and signs of disintegration were coming to surface.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

26

Contemporaneous with problems in Kashmir, trouble was brewing in Haryana, adding fuel to the fire around V.P. Singh's government. It may be recalled that immediately after the appointment of Devi Lal as Deputy Prime Minister, the Governor of Haryana was brought to Delhi and Devi Lal's son Om Prakash Chautala was sworn in Chief Minister of Haryana in place of Devi Lal. Chautala was not even a member of the legislature and he had to get himself elected to the Assembly within six months. In February, Chautala contested the election to the Assembly from the Meham constituency vacated by Devi Lal.

An orgy of violence was let loose in the constituency resulting in large-scale killings and destruction on the eve of polling. It was alleged that the 'Green Brigade', a private army of Chautala, entered the polling booths and created havoc and the police were conniving at it. Ajit Singh, Union Minister for Industry, visited Meham with some other Janata Dal members to probe into the poll violence and on his return said that Chautala must step down. Devi Lal sent a letter of resignation to the Prime Minister for forwarding it to the President. Busybodies of the party started running helter-skelter, trying to bring about reconciliation between Devi Lal and the Prime Minister but days dragged on without Devi Lal relenting.

The Election Commission, after an enquiry into the abuses in the Meham constituency, came to the conclusion

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

that police forces had been grossly misused and therefore countermanded the election. This strengthened the agitation by the rival candidate, Dangi, and others for the removal of Chautala from office. There was a hue and cry in the Press and among the public and politicians demanding removal of Chautala. Ramakrishna Hegde, Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, condemned the atrocities in the Meham poll. L.C. Jain, a member of the Planning Commission, tendered his resignation saying that the happenings in Meham were contrary to value-based politics.

In the re-election ordered in Meham, the old rivals, Dangi and Chautala, again contested. There was another independent candidate, Amit Singh, said to be on inimical terms with Dangi and a strong supporter of Chautala. On May 17, during the campaign, Amit Singh was murdered and his body was found in a field. Amit Singh's brother lodged a F.I.R. naming Dangi and his brother and others as culprits. When the police went to arrest Dangi and others, there was large-scale resistance and the police opened fire killing three persons and injuring several others. Some people alleged that Amit Singh was liquidated so that the poll, which Chautala was in danger of losing, would be countermanded and Dangi would be prosecuted. The Congress demanded imposition of President's Rule in Haryana and a judicial enquiry into the assassination of Amit Singh. V.P. Singh agreed to a judicial enquiry.

Differences between Devi Lal and V.P. Singh came out in the open on the Haryana tangle. It was reported that Cabinet members were divided, some supporting Devi Lal and others the Prime Minister. Rumours accusing V.P. Singh of arbitrariness in handling the Kashmir and Punjab issues started floating and speculation over a change of leadership thickened just six months after the National Front assumed office.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

During my sojourn in Simla, I paid a visit to the troops at Phu, near the Tibetan border. It is a difficult station with temperatures going down to –40°C during winter and yet the jawans maintained very high spirits and morale. Addressing the troops I warned Pakistan that if it indulged in any misadventure with India, it would face disastrous consequences. I clarified that India exercised extreme restraint in spite of grave provocations and this should not be misconstrued as weakness. Charging Pakistan with trying to let loose a reign of terror and create conditions favourable for an armed incursion at a suitable opportunity, I said that the illusion of adopting a low-cost option would only lead to dire consequences. Adverting to military movements including tanks very near our borders, I cautioned Pakistan against escalating tensions and creating explosive situations. I paid glorious tributes to the Army on its courage, valour, fortitude and morale. In view of Pakistan's subversive activities in Kashmir and Punjab, I wanted to sound a strong warning so that our country as well as the world may become alive to the grave dangers facing the country and the region.

When earlier the Home Ministry did not accept the resignation of Dr. P.C. Alexander, Governor of Tamil Nadu, I felt happy and presumed he would not be disturbed. Alexander is a mature civil servant who had carried out several assignments, national and international, with exemplary competence. I had known him since the days he was Development Commissioner, Small Scale Industries in the 1960s and had been continuously in touch with him. I saw him at his best when he was Principal Secretary to Indira Gandhi during her second term as Prime Minister. Always sober, objective, clear and concise, he used to guide Indira Gandhi against any precipitate action. He was no "yes man," and courageously put forth his views even if unpalatable at the moment, but always meticulously carried out decisions even if he dis-

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

agreed with them. When the D.M.K. under Karunanidhi was voted to power, he as Governor maintained excellent relations with the Chief Minister. The suggestion for his change, therefore, came as a surprise to me.

The substitution of Nirmal Mukherji, former Cabinet Secretary, for Sidharth Sankar Ray as Governor of Punjab did not bring about any improvement in the militancy-ridden state; instead it brought a further spurt in terrorism and violence. Devi Lal had been critical of Mukherji and was openly calling for his replacement. V.P. Singh and Home Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed spoke to me about appointing P.K. Kaul, former Cabinet Secretary and earlier Defence Secretary, as Governor of Punjab. I gave my concurrence to the proposal. However, when the name came up in the Press, there was a strong view that a senior politician should be preferred since a political solution and not a bureaucratic one was the need of the hour in Punjab. So the search continued for some more days. Finally after consultation with other leaders of the National Front, the name of Virendra Verma was forwarded to me for appointment. I had known Virendra Verma closely when I was Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, of which he was an active and effective member. A politician with high integrity and courage of conviction, he was an ideal choice for Punjab. On the same day I approved the appointment of Virendra Verma.

Governor C. Subramaniam of Maharashtra sent me a letter containing serious charges against Justice S.K. Desai, a senior judge of the Maharashtra High Court, supported by a statement by the Advocate-General of Bombay. I did not want to give publicity to the charges contained in the Advocate-General's memorandum as the other side had not had its say. But the charges were serious enough to merit examination and so I forwarded it to the Attorney-General

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

for advice.

The Law Minister and the Attorney-General called on me and discussed the legal and constitutional position in such cases. I opined that the Chief Justice of India, as custodian of proprieties as well as in the interests of the judiciary, would be the most appropriate person to take action if any. The Chief Justice, after examining the records and considering the legal position, advised that Justice Desai may be transferred to the Kerala High Court. This was conveyed to me by the Law Ministry and I approved it. When the Chief Justice of India conveyed this decision to Justice Desai he tendered his resignation immediately. One of the unresolved issues under the Constitution is the course to be adopted in cases where a Judge of a High Court or the Supreme Court is charged with offences of bribery and corruption. The Constitution does not provide for the Chief Justice of India, as the head of the judiciary, taking cognisance of such offences and dealing with them. The presentation of an address by both the Houses of Parliament for the removal of a judge of the higher courts under Articles 124 and 217 of the Constitution appeared to be the only course open in such cases. It is a matter for constitutional pundits to consider whether a greater role should not be assigned to the Chief Justice of India. This matter was considered at the conference of Chief Justices held under the chairmanship of the Chief Justice of India. It was decided that Chief Justices of High Courts should first examine complaints of corruption against judges and forward the finding to the Chief Justice of India. Likewise, the Chief Justice of India should look into charges against judges of the Supreme Court.

Speculation regarding the dissolution of Parliament came to be freely aired in the Press and in public utterances. To some extent it was kindled by a remark of V.P. Singh that he was very much in favour of a National Government based

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

on consensus at the Centre though he had not discussed this idea with his party colleagues and others. He also said that he was not averse to stepping down from office if that would help in the emergence of a national consensus. Naturally, people began to debate whether the President was obliged to accept the advice of an outgoing Prime Minister for a dissolution of the Lok Sabha when, in his opinion, there was a possibility of forming an alternative stable government.

Following the furore over the assassination of the independent candidate, Amit Singh, in the Meham constituency, the Prime Minister told Parliament that Chautala should resign and that a CBI enquiry would be ordered into Amit Singh's death. Chautala stepped down but got his nominee Banarsi Das Gupta elected as Chief Minister. Though Gupta declared that he was not an interim Chief Minister till Chautala got elected to the Assembly, his assertion was not given much credence. In the by-election from Darba Kalan, another Assembly constituency in Haryana, Chautala got elected with a sizeable majority.

On July 12, Banarsi Das Gupta resigned and at a hastily summoned meeting of the party, Chautala was elected leader and immediately sworn in as Chief Minister. The whole operation was done with the dexterity of a coup. One newspaper mentioned V.P. Singh's "complicity" in the reinstallation of Chautala.

This however incensed some members of V.P. Singh's Cabinet and on July 13, Arun Nehru, Minister for Commerce, Arif Mohammed Khan, Minister for Energy, and Satpal Malik, Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, resigned, as they considered that the election of Chautala with the stigma of Meham was an abandonment of the principle of value-based politics for which the Janata Dal stood. Faced with the strong reactions in the National Front and in the country, V.P. Singh wrote a letter on July 14 to the party president, S.R. Bommai,

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

conveying his wish to step down from Prime Ministership and requesting that a meeting of the Parliamentary Party be called to elect a new leader.

The same evening the Prime Minister met me and briefed me on the events leading to his sending the resignation letter to the party president. He explained that if he had sent it to me, there would have been no one to take over the government immediately and therefore he wanted the party to elect another leader before sending the resignation to me. He said he did not know that B.D. Gupta had resigned and that Chautala had been elected leader of the legislature party. He also said that Arun Nehru and others were only against Chautala becoming Chief Minister and not against his leadership. I told V.P. Singh that Chautala's election as Chief Minister should have been dealt with at the party level and that P.M.'s resignation would not solve any national problem; instead it might further complicate issues. I strongly dissuaded him from plunging the country into instability and turmoil.

Meanwhile Devi Lal made a statement that Chautala, having been democratically elected by the legislature party, could not be asked to resign and strongly opposed any such move. He wanted disciplinary action to be taken against Arun Nehru and others for publicising their resignation. The comedy of the entire episode was that no letter of resignation reached me though such a move was widely published in the Press.

The party bosses went into confabulation and later in the night, the Political Affairs Committee of the Janata Dal confirmed its confidence in V.P. Singh and agreed to work out the modalities of getting Chautala to give up his office. Thereupon V.P. Singh withdrew his resignation.

This did not surprise me. During the conversation with V.P. Singh on July 14, I asked him whether his proposed visit

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Education Centre, Panjab Univ, Chd

to the Soviet Union was not too short and whether in view of the multifaceted relationship with the Soviet Union, he should not have planned a longer visit. V.P. Singh did not say that since he had resigned, the question did not arise. On the contrary, he said four days were quite enough. It was clear that at the back of his mind he was sure of the resolution of the crisis and his continuance in office.

Even then the picture was still confused on July 16. Party president Bommai insisted that Chautala should step down while Chautala countered that as he had been elected by the legislature party, it should be consulted first. A few sham resignations of other Cabinet Ministers insisting on Chautala's resignation were announced in the media. While a political heavyweight like Biju Patnaik, Chief Minister of Orissa, was of the view that there was no need for Chautala to resign, the BJP and the CPI (M) were positive that Chautala should not continue. Later in the evening, Doordarshan broke the news that Chautala had vacated office and this brought down the curtain on V.P. Singh's resignation episode. During all this commotion the Congress kept aloof saying that what was going on was an internal party affair and not a national issue.

On the other hand, Devi Lal had launched a counter-attack by charging Arun Nehru and Arif Mohammed Khan with corruption. He is reported to have insisted that as a price for Chautala's resignation, Arun Nehru, Arif Mohammed Khan and Satpal Malik should be dropped from the Cabinet. Finally, when none of these worked, Devi Lal graciously announced that he did not want to go down in history as one who had destroyed the Janata Dal government and accepted the decision of the Political Affairs Committee of the party.

Newspapers reported that the Prime Minister had rejected the resignation letters of all the Ministers. The constitutional position is that the Prime Minister cannot reject the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

resignation of a Minister. He can only ask a Minister to withdraw his resignation and if the Minister refuses to oblige, the Prime Minister has no alternative but to accept it. Such constitutional niceties get drowned in the din of political controversies.

Before Justice V. Ramaswami was elevated to the Supreme Court, he was the Chief Justice of the Punjab and Haryana High Court. The Internal Audit and the Accountant-General, scrutinising the expenditure of the Punjab High Court, came out with a statement of excess expenditure of a sizeable amount, some of which, in their opinion, was irregular. Petitions against Justice Ramaswami were filed and the Bar strongly agitated against him, insisting that the Chief Justice of India should enquire into the matter. Chief Justice Sabyasachi Mukherji took cognizance of the charge, perused the reports of the internal audit cell of the Punjab High Court, the vigilance authority (a District and Sessions Judge), and the Accountant-General's report. He also had consultations with senior colleagues and finally read an address in open court stating that he had requested Justice Ramaswami to go on leave till the enquiry ordered by him was concluded.

In the case of Justice Desai of Bombay, a knotty issue of the competence of the Chief Justice to order an enquiry or other measures against judges of the High Court was circumvented by transferring the judge to another High Court for which there is constitutional sanction under Article 222. In the case of Justice Ramaswami, the Chief Justice exercised, however rightly on merits, a power which has not been provided for in the Constitution. The procedure of impeachment is tedious and cumbersome. There was, in my opinion, a clear case for an Ombudsman for dealing with such cases but my tentative mention of this idea to some eminent lawyers and ministers found no takers. I did not seriously

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

pursue the matter further.

The differences in the Cabinet did not abate even after the withdrawal of the Prime Minister's offer of resignation sent to the party president. Devi Lal's charge of corruption against Arun Nehru and Arif Mohammed Khan deeply disturbed the Prime Minister while the concerned Ministers insisted that either the charges be proved or an apology tendered to them. The Prime Minister wrote to Devi Lal asking him to substantiate the charges. Around July 22, Devi Lal replied repeating the charges. He also enclosed a photocopy of a letter dated November 26, 1989, alleged to have been written by V.P. Singh himself to me as President, charging Arun Nehru with complicity in the Bofors gun deal.

The Prime Minister's office contacted my office to find out if any such epistle had been received. The Secretary to the President, after perusing the copy of the alleged letter, told me that it must be a forgery. He said that the letterhead carried the address as 28 Lodi Estate, while V.P. Singh was not residing in that house on November 26, 1987, but moved into it only in March 1989. He also said that V.P. Singh always addressed me as "Dear Rashtrapathiji" while the letter started with "Sir", a totally unusual form of address from a friend like V.P. Singh. At my suggestion the Secretary made a thorough search of the registers of all incoming and outgoing letters of Rashtrapati Bhavan and found no such letter or entry in any register.

Thereupon, the Prime Minister wrote to Devi Lal to name the person who had given him the photocopy of the letter dated November 26, 1987, and also to give details of the charges against Arun Nehru and Arif Mohammed Khan. Meanwhile pressures for Devi Lal to be dropped from the Cabinet for making "reckless" allegations against colleagues were mounted by not only the affected Ministers, but by other Ministers as well. Devi Lal was not only reluctant to

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

withdraw the charges but also declined to express regret for even the doubtful letter. A general impression was gaining ground in the country that the Prime Minister was weak and that the credibility of the government was fast eroding. It was commented that the Janata Dal government was all the time engaged in crisis management in the party and not in the management of the country's problems.

The last straw that broke the camel's back was an interview given by Devi Lal to *The Illustrated Weekly of India* bearing date July 29–August 4, in which he is reported to have described the Prime Minister as "spineless" and other Cabinet colleagues as "*nalayaks*" and "wimps". The Prime Minister sent a letter to Devi Lal in which he set out that the alleged letter from the Prime Minister to the President had turned out to be "a crude act of forgery," and the serious allegations against Cabinet colleagues were unsubstantiated. Derogatory remarks had been made against the Prime Minister. All of which constituted violation of the canons of collective responsibility, and he (Prime Minister) had recommended to the President of India "to drop you (Devi Lal) from the Council of Ministers."

At about 9 p.m. on August 18, the Prime Minister rang me up and said that he had decided to drop Devi Lal from the Council of Ministers and that Principal Secretary Deshmukh was coming to me with the papers. At 10 p.m. Deshmukh and P. Murari, Secretary to the President, met me. Deshmukh handed over a letter from the Prime Minister advising me to "remove" Devi Lal, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture, from the Council of Ministers.

I thought for a while. There were a number of precedents where the Prime Minister had recommended the acceptance of the resignation of a minister but hardly any where the Prime Minister had recommended the removal of a minister. In the states, Governors had dismissed ministers who had

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

refused to resign when asked to do so by the Chief Minister. In the Union Government there had been no such case.

I raised the question with Deshmukh and asked him if there was any precedent for the Prime Minister recommending removal without seeking the resignation of the minister. He was not able to help. I thought that Devi Lal could have been given the option to resign as a matter of courtesy before recommending his removal, though there was no such stipulation in the Constitution.

I had a vague recollection of Mohan Dharia being dismissed by Indira Gandhi in 1975. In that case Mohan Dharia, Minister for Housing, had expressed the view that the government should have a dialogue with Jayaprakash Narayan, a view contrary to Indira Gandhi's policy of confrontation and suppression of J.P.'s movement. I looked into Basu's commentary on the Constitution and found that Indira Gandhi had written to Mohan Dharia that she was recommending to the President to drop him from the Council of Ministers. On receipt of the letter Mohan Dharia had sent a letter of resignation which was accepted by the President.

In this case also, the Prime Minister had informed Devi Lal that he had recommended to the President to drop him from the Council of Ministers. So at 11 p.m. a Rashtrapati Bhavan communique was issued in the following terms:

"The President, R. Venkataraman, on the advice of the Prime Minister, is pleased to order with immediate effect the removal of Mr. Devi Lal, Deputy Prime Minister and Agriculture Minister, from the Union Council of Ministers."

One should ponder on a few odd features in the whole episode:

(1) How did the letter from Devi Lal to the Prime Minister, accusing Arun Nehru and Arif Mohammed Khan of

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

corruption, leak out?

(2) How did the Prime Minister's letter to Devi Lal, seeking substantiation of the charges against Cabinet Ministers, find verbatim reproduction in a newspaper?

(3) How did Devi Lal's letter enclosing a photocopy of the alleged letter from V.P. Singh addressed to the President of India find its way to the print media?

Obviously one or more of the parties involved must have leaked them. If correspondence between the Prime Minister and his Cabinet colleagues becomes public property, it would become impossible to run an administration. Open government has its limitations on how open it should be and at what stage.

The annual conference of Governors could not be held in 1989 because of elections to Parliament. So it was convened on July 27 and 28 with the participation of the new Prime Minister and his government. The deteriorating law and order situation in Kashmir and Punjab, Naxalite troubles in Andhra and Maharashtra, the rebel organisation of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland and the agitation over Ram Janmabhoomi attracted the greatest attention. Some Governors had been replaced and the perceptions of the new Governors of the local situation were of interest to the nation.

In my address I told the Governors that their earlier role as ceremonial heads of state had changed and that they had now been called upon to shoulder the responsibility of direct administration in states under President's Rule and that they should therefore exercise judgement with extreme care. I referred to the deteriorating conditions in Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab and communal tensions elsewhere and called upon them to play a constructive role in thwarting the subversive forces eating into the vitals of our democracy. I

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

appealed to them to prune the expenditure of the Raj Bhavans and drew attention to a cut of 10 percent I had imposed on Rashtrapati Bhavan expenditure and to the cancellation of my annual sojourn in Hyderabad in 1990. I complimented the government on the happy resolution of the problems with Nepal and told Pakistan of our desire to solve all issues on the basis of the Simla agreement.

After the Governors had made a review of the problems of their states, the Prime Minister gave a detailed picture of the efforts made to combat terrorism and to tackle the economic situation in the country. He warned the secessionists of the government's firm resolve to crush such movements with an iron hand. He reiterated the government's resolve to abide by the decision of the court on the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute and its enforcement, regardless of any agitation by any of the parties. His firmness gave a hint that no agitation by the losing party, whichever it was, would be tolerated. He made it clear that the government was committed to implementing the Mandal Commission report on the backward classes even in the face of resistance from any section.

The Prime Minister spoke with confidence and authority, notwithstanding the problems in the party over the bickering between Devi Lal and Arun Nehru. V.P. Singh put forth his ideas clearly and cogently and in a pleasant manner. He struck one as a sincere and honest politician struggling to sustain values in public life. He left a very favourable impression on the Governors' minds and instilled a measure of enthusiasm in the discharge of their tasks.

On August 2 there was newspaper speculation that the Prime Minister was in favour of a snap poll. It also stated that "according to the sources, the Prime Minister is believed to have conveyed his sentiments to the President Mr. R.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Venkataraman."

There was absolutely no foundation for this report. The Prime Minister did not mention any such thing to me. V.P. Singh was thinking of taking a vote of confidence from the Parliamentary Party to demonstrate his strength after the removal of Devi Lal.

A controversy raged over the termination of the services of Dr. Subhas Kashyap, Secretary-General to the Lok Sabha, by Speaker Rabi Ray. The Secretary-General is a permanent official working under the overall control of the presiding officer. Dr. Kashyap met me and explained his case. I asked my secretariat to obtain a copy of the rules and regulations to acquaint myself with the legal position of the permanent staff of the Lok Sabha secretariat. I did not ask "for all relevant files". Here again the print media was indulging in gossip.

Rakshabandhan has always been a pleasant occasion in Rashtrapati Bhavan. Handicapped, retarded and incapacitated children usually come in large numbers. They sing and dance and partake of the liberal supply of sweets and snacks. After disposing of other callers my family members used to sit with these unfortunate children and make them display their skills like the blind doing Bharatanatyam, the armless painting with their toes or with brushes held between the teeth. Every child was allowed to tie *rakhi* without exception. As they left I used to feel sad that these children were suffering for no fault of theirs. I also gave liberal donations to non-governmental organisations engaged in relief work.

On the outbreak of the Gulf war, Indian nationals on the British Airways flight via Kuwait got stranded there. On receipt of information about their plight, I wrote to the Prime Minister to look into the matter and provide relief. The Prime Minister promptly replied that efforts were being made to bring these Indian nationals home via Amman in Jordan

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

since the airports in Kuwait and Baghdad were closed. Meanwhile thousands of expatriate Indians in Kuwait and Iraq started trekking to Amman in the hope of being able to return to India. They found that no arrangements had been made by the Indian mission to help them and they were in a miserable condition. Some members of Parliament including K.R. Narayanan, Dinesh Singh, A.K. Antony and Gundu Rao wrote giving a harrowing picture of the expatriates' conditions and wanted supply of essentials to those stranded in Amman and aeroplanes chartered to bring them back. I again wrote to the Prime Minister on the subject, enclosing a copy of the memorandum sent by Members of Parliament.

On August 25, Foreign Minister I. K. Gujral, an old friend, came for a breakfast discussion and explained the measures taken to afford relief to Indian nationals affected both in Kuwait and Baghdad. The magnitude of the problem defied easy or immediate solution but everything to alleviate the sufferings of the people stranded in Amman was being done, he assured me.

In my Independence Day address for 1990, I condemned the barbaric practice of kidnapping public servants and innocents and holding them to ransom to achieve totally immoral objectives. I bemoaned the growth of animosities such as majorities versus minorities, rural versus urban, migrants versus residents and hill versus plains. I urged the people to reorient their attitude to work and resolve to do nothing less than the best they could so that the nation may be transformed into a modern competitive one. I also called on industry to adapt itself to the dramatic changes overtaking the global economy and to update technology, improve efficiency and reduce costs so as to capture a place in the world market.

Speaking about communal harmony I quoted saint Kabir who sang:

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Hari is in the East,
Allah is in the West,
Look within your heart,
For there you will find Karim and Ram.
All the men and women in the world
Are his living forms.
Kabir is the child of Allah and Ram.

I balanced the quotation in Hindi with one in Tamil from poet Bharathi who wrote:

Unity brings (good) life
Disunity only ruin to all.

After his removal from the Ministry, Devi Lal organised a mammoth *kisan* rally at Boat Club in Delhi to demonstrate the popular support he enjoyed. I often wonder how these demonstrations delude the person who organises or more often engineers such massive demonstrations, into believing that he commands acceptance from the whole of India. Even if ten million people around Delhi split their throats with acclamation for their leader, it does not follow that the 880 million and odd people of the country support him. Anyway, these demonstrations had come into vogue during the last few years. It is not realised that it is always easy to organise such rallies at some cost for some time.

Apparently, the Prime Minister was unnerved by this demonstration. He was advised by his friends that Devi Lal might use the implementation of the Mandal Commission report to gain strength and erode his political base. The Prime Minister announced in the Lok Sabha that the government would implement in toto the Commission's recommendations including 27 percent reservation of posts, admission to professional institutions and promotions in

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

services and carry forward the vacancies if suitable candidates were not immediately available from the backward classes. The Prime Minister told me that his announcement was greeted with thumping cheers and members wanted these concessions to be extended to minorities as well.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

27

Students' agitation against the reservation policy exploded violently. Roads were blocked, buses burnt and government property was damaged by students. The entire city of Delhi was engulfed in turmoil. Police resorted to lathi-charges and arrested a large number of rampaging students. Rumours of maltreatment of students spread like wild fire. A number of policemen were also injured and this was said to have infuriated the police, making them resort to harsh repression. The protagonists of reservation in the Cabinet, Ram Vilas Paswan and Sharad Yadav, were reported to have incited pro-reservationists to counter the anti-reservation agitation. On August 28, Dalit Sena activists took out a procession in favour of the reservation policy even while the anti-reservation agitation continued.

Middle class intellectuals and service personnel condemned the reservation policy stating that it would perpetuate the caste system and mediocrity. They flooded me with letters and telephone calls. Like bush fire the agitation spread rapidly to Haryana, Gujarat, Orissa and a few other States. The BJP criticised the government for taking a unilateral decision on the implementation of the Mandal Commission recommendations without consulting it even though it was one of the parties supporting the government. This drew a rebuttal from Jaipal Reddy, General Secretary of the Janata Dal, who asserted that implementation of the Mandal Commission recommendations was part of the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

election manifesto of the party, and it was included in the President's address to Parliament as a government policy. He recalled the Prime Minister's clarification in the previous session of Parliament that the Commission's recommendations would be implemented.

On August 28, despite heavy rain the anti-reservation group of students held a meeting. They decided to march to Rashtrapati Bhavan to present a memorandum. I refused to allow the use of Rashtrapati Bhavan for demonstrations and sent word that I would be glad to meet half a dozen representatives of the students. Finally about a dozen students, drenched in the rain, turned up. I was distressed to see the young people in such a shape and asked my staff to give them towels to dry themselves. But the students, enraged after all the battering by police and the rain, refused.

One student pleaded that being the highest authority in the land, I should not sit quiet. I explained calmly that being the head of the state and not head of the government, I was not involved in decisions made by the government. I, however, added that I would convey their strong feelings to the government. Another student decried a democracy where the President could not express his views on burning issues. I smiled and said he might one day administer the Constitution and realise the powers of the President of India. Their attempts to draw a categorical statement on the reservation issue from me having failed, they talked about police atrocities and asked for the dismissal of ministers like Ram Vilas Paswan and Sharad Yadav for inciting pro-reservationists to violence. I explained to them that I fully realised the importance of the issue and agreed that an acceptable solution should be hammered out by all parties and promised to convey to the Prime Minister their strong feelings. About a thousand Delhi University teachers and researchers appealed to me through a memorandum that

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

implementation of the Mandal Commission report should be stayed pending a national debate.

When the situation appeared grim I requested the Prime Minister to meet me for a discussion. He came at 8.30 p.m. on the same day. As the agitation was taking an ugly turn and spreading rapidly, I asked him to make every effort to defuse it. I made the following suggestions:

(i) He should call representatives of students, some teachers and academicians and allow them to present their views. I said this might start a dialogue and decelerate the agitation.
(ii) He should call a round table of all political parties and arrive at a consensus.

V.P. Singh's response to my first suggestion was that he had already stated in Parliament that he was ready to discuss it with any group of persons. He did not like the specific suggestion of talks with students, teachers and academicians. As regards the second, V.P. Singh reiterated his commitment to stand by 27 percent reservation for other backward classes but was prepared to discuss only the question of additional reservation of five to ten percent for the economically weaker sections. Unfortunately, people in office develop a rigidity or a false sense of prestige that the government should not yield to pressure. I was no exception to it during my earlier career in charge of vital departments. Wisdom dawns when it is too late or the situation is beyond redemption.

Rajiv Gandhi called on me on August 30. He explained that among his colleagues, some were in favour of total acceptance of the Mandal Commission report while an equally strong opinion was against it. His own personal view was that the benefit of reservations should go to the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

deserving persons among the backward classes and not to children of doctors, lawyers, administrative officers and big landowners. He said he was convening a meeting of the Congress Working Committee to discuss the issue and all its implications. He said that a few people from the Janata Dal were approaching the Congress Party to explore the possibility of unseating the government, but they were not in sufficient strength to do so. He was not encouraging them and his party was not yet ready to face a general election. He said he was in no hurry to get into office and preferred to wait and watch. I merely listened without comment.

I however told him that I had handled the debate on the Mandal Commission report in August 1982 as Minister in additional charge of Home and it might be useful to him to have a look at the stand the party took during Indira Gandhi's time.

On August 31, the Prime Minister invited all parties for a discussion regarding special reservation of five to ten percent for economically backward sections of society. I cautioned the Prime Minister on the same day that his proposal for additional reservation would carry the total reservations beyond 50 percent which was the limit set by the Supreme Court and therefore he should take legal opinion into account before pushing forward the idea of a meeting of all parties.

On September 3, the Congress Party declined to participate in the all-party meeting on the plea that as the main opposition it had not been consulted before making the announcement in Parliament and that it was not prepared to discuss the limited issue of additional reservation for economically backward sections but would consider participation on any discussion of the entire issue of reservations.

Arun Nehru came for breakfast. He spoke all the time. It is his habit. He said that the item regarding implementation

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

of the Mandal Commission report was not originally on the agenda of the Cabinet meeting and was introduced at the last minute and that he did not attend the meeting. He said he was not prepared to criticise Rajiv Gandhi in and out of season as the Janata Dal wanted. He was critical of the functioning of V.P. Singh and added that he and Arif Mohammed Khan were contemplating resigning from the Cabinet but desisted from doing so as they did not want to create a crisis.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

28

The question of holding elections in Punjab was assuming importance. The proclamation of President's Rule would expire on November 10 and there is no provision for further extension without a constitutional amendment. If not, the election process would have to commence by October 10. The BJP and the Left parties were not in favour of an election in the context of the mounting extremist activities. The Congress was not disclosing its stand and wanted to keep the government in anxious suspense.

Even V. P. Singh must have felt in his heart of hearts that no free and fair elections could be conducted in Punjab given the prevailing situation there. But he had to put up a show of favouring elections to boost the image of the Janata Dal as a truly democratic organisation. He did not want to own that his government had failed to solve the Punjab problem.

I advised Rajiv Gandhi that national interest should take priority over scoring debating points and an election in Punjab at such a time would be nothing short of a national disaster. I said the extremists would call the shots, scare away voters and other candidates and then get themselves elected in a farce of an election. I also cautioned him that they might pass a resolution in the Assembly declaring Punjab as Khalistan State and internationalise the issue. He might for a while play a cat and mouse game but should ultimately end up by supporting the constitutional amendment, I said. Rajiv Gandhi looked convinced of the picture I presented but did

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

not give any categorical reply.

The Prime Minister called on me at 8 p.m. on September 14. For all the hectic time that he was having because of the Mandal Commission agitation and the Punjab problem, he looked fresh, calm and confident. He was coming from a meeting of the Political Affairs Committee of the Janata Dal. He explained that he was in favour of holding elections in Punjab as the situation was not going to improve in six months or even in one year and the sooner the problem was met, the better. He referred to the attitude of the BJP and the CPI(M) against the election but countered it by saying that mere postponement of elections was not likely to ease the situation.

I expressed my view that if elections were to be held, they would not be free or fair and the extremists would subvert the election process by violence and intimidation of candidates and voters. I also repeated my fear of extremists capturing the Assembly and passing embarrassing resolutions and trying to internationalise the issue. He realised the seriousness and magnitude of the problem and expressed his difficulty that unless the Congress Party cooperated he could not get the constitutional amendment through both Houses of the Parliament. I told V. P. Singh that Congress could not afford to take the risk of forcing elections in Punjab and that it was for the Prime Minister to decide whether to postpone the elections or not.

While the agitation against reservation went on unabated, V.P. Singh informed me that he had already clarified that reservation would not apply to defence, science and technology, and research organisations and he had met most of the criticism. But the students' agitation gathered momentum and spread to other parts of the country. Police repression became harsher, aggravating the wrath of the agitators. It was unfortunate that girl students of Delhi were

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

lathi-charged by the police. They could have been arrested and taken to Suraj Kund or Badkhal Lake and released there to enjoy a picnic.

One student named Rajiv Goswami attempted self-immolation and lay in Safdarjung Hospital hovering between life and death. The road to the hospital was blocked by students. BJP leaders L.K. Advani and Madanlal Khurana tried to visit the student in hospital but were turned back by the students demanding BJP's withdrawal of support to the government before showing sympathy to the victim of repression. Other cases of attempted self-immolation were reported from Kurukshetra and elsewhere.

The National Integration Council met in Madras on September 22. The Southern States had not reacted to the implementation of the Mandal Report since reservation for backward classes had been in vogue in the Madras Presidency from 1930. The BJP did not attend the Council meeting. Its conduct was becoming "curiouser and curiouser". It criticised the government on the reservation policy, agitated against the government on the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue but still supported the government in the voting.

On September 20, there was a grand function at Rashtrapati Bhavan for presenting the Indira Gandhi Peace Prize to the former Norwegian Prime Minister and renowned environmentalist, Madam Gro Harlem Brundtland. Mrs Brundtland was the Chairperson of the World Commission on Environment and had produced a very valuable report, admired by the world for its thrust on bringing the issue of environment and development to the forefront of human consciousness. Presenting the award I drew the attention of the audience to her pioneering efforts to create global awareness about the need to change the lifestyles of people and nations and pay attention to the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

environment that sustains all life.

Accepting the award amidst thunderous applause, Mrs Brundtland paid generous encomiums to Indira Gandhi whose passion for environmental preservation "was next to none in the world." Referring to the changes overtaking Europe and the world, she said that for the first time since the World War II, there was a chance to reverse the arms race, and asserted that the Gulf crisis should not be allowed to interrupt the process. She emphasised that the industrialised nations had built up their economy by using resources wastefully, with no concern for the morrow. She proposed a global fund for the protection of the environment by industrialised nations contributing 0.1 percent of their GDP. She also urged the industrialised nations to switch over to environment-friendly technologies. In her view the developed countries were the largest polluters of the environment and therefore they ought to meet the costs of restoration and development of ecology.

I visited the National Security Guards organisation on September 22 at Manesar, Haryana. This organisation was set up in 1986 by an Act of Parliament for training commandos to fight terrorists. The training course is arduous and trainees have to undergo many hazardous exercises, from parachute jumping to piercing through fire and smoke. Instructions on handling weapons as well as sophisticated explosive devices are meticulously imparted. Dr. S. Subramaniam, the then Director-General of NSG, was a highly competent officer and his precision and care were evident in everything I saw. There was a demonstration of skills by the trainees for about two hours. The Governor of Haryana, Dhaniklal Mandal, was also present.

I spoke to the trainees about the increasing menace of terrorism not only in the country but also in the entire world and how terrorism had become an international contagion. I

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

congratulated them on their high morale. I said that the safety and security of the top people of the country were in their hands and they should prove worthy of the trust placed in them.

On September 24, the President of Seychelles paid a return state visit to India. He was honoured with a ceremonial reception and given a grand banquet. Seychelles, which is hardly 450 sq km in area with a population of 100,000, has a strategic position in the Indian Ocean. Its concern for its safety had been intensified when African mercenaries launched an attack on the airport in Mahe, the capital, in November 1981. President Rene of Seychelles called for a regional arrangement immediately after the abortive coup in Maldives in 1988. He is a champion of NAM, a relentless critic of apartheid and an ardent supporter of the proposal for the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace. Few countries have such a close identity of views with India.

The talks, the banquet and discussions with officials went off smoothly and pleasantly and President Rene went back with renewed assurances of cooperation from India on every front.

Meanwhile the anti-reservation agitation escalated. On September 24, another student of Deshbandhu College doused himself with petrol and set himself ablaze. Even school-children started condemning the government. Unfortunately V.P. Singh, fresh from a flattering reception in Madras, was more than ever convinced that the people were with him and that he would return to power on this issue. Eminent administrators like L.P. Singh and several persons with no predilections for or against reservation rang me up to end the chaotic situation. The issue was no longer reservation but restoration of normalcy in the country. So I decided to request V.P. Singh to meet me. As usual, the Prime Minister responded immediately fixing a meeting at 8 p.m.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

on Sunday, September 20.

Chandra Shekhar, who had always been in the line for the office of Prime Minister, called on me at 12.30 p.m. the same day. Briefly, he made the following points:

- V.P. Singh had proved himself to be an incompetent administrator not only on the reservation issue but also on several others.
- The Prime Minister should start a dialogue with students at a higher level than that of a junior minister.
- The economic situation in the country was worsening day by day and it would engulf the government in deep distress.
- V.P. Singh wanted to dissolve the Lok Sabha but probably changed his mind because of the reported reluctance of the President to accept the suggestion.

I have been long accustomed to probing questions to answer them inadvertently. I merely said that a dialogue was the only way of solving problems and it was never too late to do so. I also explained the oil crisis following the Gulf war and said our inability to reduce oil consumption was the root cause of our economic ills. The talks between us were very cordial and while leaving he expressed his hope that the President would suitably "advise" the Prime Minister. There were one or two other callers but they did not add much to the solution of the national problem.

V.P. Singh met me at 8 p.m. Usually he came dressed formally in *sherwani*. That day he came in his *pyjama* and *kurta* which itself was interpreted by the Press as an indicator of his intended relinquishment of office. I mentioned to him that I was deeply disturbed by the continuing lawlessness in the country and the disruption of life over a long period. I was distressed by the police firing and the death of students.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

The Prime Minister could have taken offence at my unpalatable remarks and said that he knew his job. Instead, he was responsive and said he was conscious of the ugly shape the agitation was taking. He had instructed the police not to resort to lathi-charge against students. However, when the agitation turned violent, the police had to resort to suppression. He also pointed out that anti-social elements easily mingled with the agitators and damaged government and private property. He then referred to his appeal to the students to enter into a dialogue "without any pre-conditions," but the students had not responded. He apprehended if he whittled down or backtracked on the reservation issue, the pro-reservationists would mount a much stronger agitation throughout rural India.

When I pointed out that the level of his negotiators did not inspire confidence in the students and that more important Cabinet Ministers should be designated to deal with the issue, V.P. Singh readily agreed to nominate Madhu Dandavate, Finance Minister, P. Unnikrishnan, Communications Minister, and Dinesh Goswami, Law Minister, for the task. It seemed that the Prime Minister was genuinely interested in a negotiated solution.

The Chief Justice of India, Sabyasachi Mukherji, died in London of a massive heart attack. He was a sober, soft-spoken and a perfect gentleman without any bias or prejudice. He and his wife used to attend concerts in Rashtrapati Bhavan and enjoy the different cultural presentations from all parts of the country. We felt sad at his premature demise and expressed our condolences.

I left for Mysore on September 28 to participate as chief guest at the *Dussehra* festival the next day. During the princely rule in Mysore, the *Dussehra* festival was an event of great significance and rejoicing. Goddess Chamundeswari, who crushed the demon Mahishasura after nine days of

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

intense penance, is traditionally taken out in a procession on the last day of the festivities. The Maharaja used to hold a *Darbar*, inviting eminent people of India as state guests. After the merger of princely states with India, the Maharaja lost his glamour and became the *Rajpramukh*, the equivalent of a Governor. Later, even the institution of *Rajpramukh* was abolished but the *Dussehra* continues to be celebrated as a state function.

That year, my friend Veerendra Patil, who had become Chief Minister of Karnataka, insisted that I attend the *Dussehra* function as the President of India.

We stayed in Jaya Vilas Palace Hotel, one of the palaces of the Maharaja now converted into an India Tourism Development Corporation hotel. The palace was luxurious and filled with elegant Indian motifs.

In the evening we visited the glorious Brindavan Gardens at the foot of the Krishnaraja Sagar dam built by the renowned engineer Dewan Visveswaraya. The dam was brimming with water, just two feet below the full reservoir level of 124 ft. The vast spread of water just one foot below the setting sun was a magnificent sight. Nature's beauty fills one's heart with inexplicable joy. I had a similar emotion, when several years earlier, I saw the sun dissolving in a pool of "blood" at Kanyakumari where the three seas, the Bay of Bengal, the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea meet. The Brindavan Garden is one of the finest beauty spots of India. Carefully planned and designed by Sir Mirza Ismail, the talented and aesthetic Dewan of Mysore, it reminds me of the fountain garden at Petrovorodsky, the winter palace of the Czars near Leningrad.

On September 29, the day of *Dussehra*, I worshipped at the Chamundeswari temple on top of the hill. In the afternoon, after I and the Governor and Minister Moily had offered *puja*, the procession started with Goddess

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Chamundeswari atop the caparisoned elephant. The whole spectacle resembled the Republic Day parade without military participation. Folk artists representing various districts, wearing vivid costumes, danced along with the tableaux of their area. Historic events like Queen Abbakka fighting the Portuguese and the glory of the Vijayanagar empire lent charm to the parade. Other states like Uttar Pradesh, Nagaland and Tamil Nadu also participated, making the procession a memorable one.

On September 30, we arrived at the Jog Falls, one of the world's highest waterfalls. I have already described the mighty Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe. The five streams descending 800 ft, had a picturesque beauty of its own. In the night, a lighted bundle of hay was let down in one of the streams and it gave a glittering view of the Falls as it dropped. The Karnataka Government is developing this place as a top tourist spot.

Despite V.P. Singh's protestations that elections should be held in Punjab on expiry of the current term of President's Rule on November 10, opinion grew among political parties that a fair poll could not be held in Punjab under the prevailing conditions. The Constitution (75th Amendment) Bill enabling the government to extend President's Rule in Punjab for another six months, which was moved in the Lok Sabha on October 18, fell through for want of the requisite majority as the Opposition Congress abstained from voting. Rule 338 of the Rules of Procedure of the Lok Sabha bars reintroduction of a defeated Bill in the same session. However, since a consensus had been reached among all parties including the Congress regarding the need for postponement of elections in Punjab, the Constitution (76th Amendment) Bill was moved on October 4 in the Lok Sabha, the House voting for suspension of Rule 338. After a brief debate the amendment was passed by an overwhelming

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

majority of 432 out of 441 members present and voting. The same day, the Rajya Sabha also passed the Bill with an equally impressive majority of 212 out of 218 members voting for it. I gave assent to the Bill the same day.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

29

Though it was Veerendra Patil, Chief Minister of Karnataka, who insisted on my attending the *Dussehra*, he could not be there due to indisposition. After Karnataka had slipped out of the Congress fold, Veerendra Patil was put in charge of the Congress Party in the state during the 1989 combined election to Parliament and the State Assembly. Veerendra Patil has a reputation for efficiency and integrity and he was able to muster 180 seats out of 225 in the Assembly and practically all the seats to the Lok Sabha. Indira Gandhi had a good opinion of him as he maintained the highest decorum while contesting against her in the Chickmagalur Lok Sabha constituency. She not only readmitted him into the Congress but made him a Cabinet Minister during her second tenure as Prime Minister from 1980. Veerendra Patil was a colleague of mine in the Union Cabinet and I have a high opinion of his competence. Somehow Rajiv Gandhi and Veerendra Patil did not strike a friendly balance and Rajiv Gandhi dropped him from his Cabinet.

Though Veerendra Patil had achieved spectacular success for the Congress, he was hamstrung right from the moment he became Chief Minister. He was not allowed to expand his Cabinet with the members of his choice, while members hostile to him were imposed on him. He was made to wait for an audience with the Congress President as any

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

casual caller. In those days Veerendra Patil used to meet and tell me all his woes.

The mild stroke that Veerendra Patil suffered during my visit to Karnataka provided an opportunity to ease him out. Rajiv Gandhi told me on October 10 that as he had found Veerendra Patil paralysed and unable to function, he had directed the Congress Party to elect a new leader. In the meanwhile, 140 dissident Congress Legislature Party members presented a memorandum to Governor Bhanu Pratap Singh which stated that Veerendra Patil's government had lost its majority in the House and it should be dismissed. The dissidents were called to form the government. Veerendra Patil presented a list of 103 members and claimed that he continued to command the confidence of the House. I was not aware of Veerendra Patil writing to the Governor advising the dissolution of the Assembly. The Governor recommended to the Union Government imposition of President's Rule for a "short period", keeping the Assembly in suspended animation.

The Union Cabinet considered the issue and decided to accept the Governor's recommendation. The Home Minister called on me at 12.30 p.m. on October 10 and requested my approval for imposition of President's Rule. I was reluctant as there was nothing to show "that a situation had arisen in which the government of the state cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution," as required by Article 356. There was a government under Veerendra Patil and it had not been defeated in the House. The Governor need not concern himself with internecine disputes within the ruling party but could leave it to them to fight it out. Further, it had always been my view that the question whether a Ministry commands the confidence of the legislature should be tested in the legislature and not by counting of heads elsewhere. The Home Minister said that

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

the Cabinet had taken a decision, hinting that I was bound by it. I told the Home Minister of my willingness to discuss it with the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister came shortly after at 2.30 p.m. and I explained to him that there was nothing in the Governor's report to show a constitutional breakdown or that the government could not be carried on, and whether the Ministry enjoyed the confidence of the Assembly should be tested in the legislature. The Prime Minister told me that the situation had become complicated as the Chief Minister himself had recommended the dissolution of the Assembly. When I told him that I did not have the information, the Prime Minister spoke to the Governor from my office and asked him to fax a message confirming the Chief Minister's advice for dissolution of the Assembly.

The Governor demurred saying that he did not want dissolution of the Assembly. The Prime Minister clarified that he only wanted a record to prove the Chief Minister's recommendation for dissolution of the Assembly. I assured V.P. Singh that as soon as the papers were put up I would issue the proclamation. Actually, the proclamation imposing President's Rule was issued at 3.30 p.m.

Rajiv Gandhi called at 4 p.m. with a few others. He protested against President's Rule, informing me of the decision of the Congress Party to elect a new leader and wanted permission to form the government. I replied that I was bound by the advice of the Council of Ministers and had earlier acted accordingly. The earlier occasion alluded to was the dismissal of the Bommai ministry on the recommendation of Governor Venkatasubbiah. It had become a custom to criticise the President whenever he accepted the Cabinet decision. Even former Prime Ministers, who had obliquely hinted at the President's obligation to accept the advice of the Council of Ministers, indulge in this game of blaming the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

President for the acts of the current Prime Minister.

On October 13, 150 Congress members of Parliament marched from Parliament House to Rashtrapati Bhavan shouting slogans against the Prime Minister for the murder of democracy in Karnataka. In keeping with my practice of not allowing Rashtrapati Bhavan for demonstrations, ten representatives of the group met me and expressed condemnation of President's Rule and asked for revocation of the proclamation.

Meanwhile the Congress Legislature Party of Karnataka elected' Bangarappa as leader and submitted to the Governor a list of supporters asking him to appoint Bangarappa as Chief Minister. It was followed up by the Congress in Delhi and a *dharna* by Bangarappa at Bangalore on October 15. The Prime Minister assured the Congress leaders of the Cabinet's decision to rescind the proclamation on receiving the Governor's report.

The government advised revocation of the proclamation on October 17 and I immediately accepted it. Bangarappa was sworn in as Chief Minister after President's Rule for about 11 days, the shortest in my memory.

During all this turmoil, one constitutional issue escaped the attention of all parties. What should a Governor do if a Chief Minister, under threat of removal by the Legislature Party, advises dissolution of the Assembly? More important, what should the President do, if in identical circumstances, the Prime Minister advises dissolution of the Lok Sabha? In both cases they are *de jure* in office and their advice under Articles 163(1) and 74(1) would seem to be binding on the Governor and the President. In view of the growing differences among the National Front parties I was getting worried about a similar situation confronting me any time.

On October 15, the legendary African leader Nelson Mandela paid a visit to India. He was accorded all the

CC-0. Mumukshu Bhawan Varanasi Collection. Digitized by eGangotri

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

honours of a visiting head of state, barring the 21-gun salute. There was a gala reception in the forecourt of Rashtrapati Bhavan and a large number of Ministers, officials and diplomats were present. Mandela at 72 was a picture of confidence and courage, calmness and elegance. He had the bearing of a President-designate but without ostentatious ways and manners. His simple, sincere and pleasing personality charmed everyone.

After the ceremonial reception, Mandela and I, with our aides, had a 40-minute discussion. The African leader said that it was his dream to visit the land of Mahatma Gandhi and he felt a thrill in coming to India. He thanked the President and the Government of India for the warm, generous and consistent support to the African cause. For a person who had been in prison for 27 years, he spoke without rancour or bitterness and said he did not have doubts about the integrity or the intentions of South African President de Klerk and hoped a negotiated settlement would be reached with the South African government. He also mentioned that about 30,000 South Africans were in exile and it was essential to get them back to their homes and hearths.

I assured Mandela of India's unqualified support to the elimination of apartheid and for the establishment of majority rule in South Africa. I recalled how at the banquet hosted by the Queen of England, I had expressed myself against relaxation of sanctions against South Africa by the U.K. The role of the Africa Fund in helping front-line states to withstand pressures from South Africa and the need for augmentation of resources were also discussed.

There was a grand public reception at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium where 50,000 people accorded Mandela an enthusiastic welcome. Shouts of "Long Live Mandela" and "*Lal Salaam*" (Red Salute) rent the air as he rose to speak. The ANC leader touched the hearts of the audience when he

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

mentioned that it was Mahatma Gandhi who started the first organised and disciplined political struggle in South Africa, establishing the Natal Indian Congress in 1894. He appealed to India to redouble its political, moral, material and financial support in the present near-final stage of the African struggle for popular rule in their country.

The banquet for Mandela had all the usual pomp and glitter. After formal introductions the guests wanted to have a word with the charismatic leader. Eager faces surrounded him to hear his personal thoughts on the African situation.

In my banquet speech, I welcomed Mandela as a symbol of Africa's revolt against colonialism and racism, as the foremost freedom fighter of the African continent and as a pre-eminent representative of Africa's determination to end the tyranny of apartheid. I said: "In this historic hall several state banquets have been held in the past in honour of emperors, kings and heads of state. But today we are proud to welcome one who reigns not over lands and territories but over the hearts of millions upon millions of the world's people, black and white, young and old, rich as well as poor." Paying my tribute to the personal qualities of Mandela, I described him as one "who has conquered fear, despair and hate." "Despite your long years of incarceration which would have broken the spirit of lesser men, you have preferred the path of faith to suspicion, reconciliation to rancour and reason to prejudice," I said. I concluded by extending India's full support to the African National Congress in its just struggle for a popular government based on equality and human dignity.

In his reply Mandela thanked India for its unstinted support to the African people in their struggle against apartheid and said that the common struggle which we had waged to uproot the apartheid system in South Africa was approaching its successful conclusion. "We have not got

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Rantalab Jammu

there yet but the victory day is not far off," he said. Referring to India's relentless campaign for release of political prisoners in South Africa, Mandela said, "We heard your voices even through the thick prison walls and when we heard that demand wafting across the vast expanse of the Indian Ocean, we knew that there was no possibility that the apartheid regime could hold us in jail for ever, as it intended." Expressing optimism that success was very near, Mandela urged India "to walk the last mile together" to achieve the common objective of transforming South Africa into a united democratic non-racial society.

On October 16, Dr. Nelson Mandela was conferred the highest civilian award of Bharat Ratna at a colourful ceremony at Rashtrapati Bhavan.

During talks with the Indian delegation Mandela welcomed the decision of V.P. Singh to implement the Mandal Commission report and called it a courageous decision. He said it was one which struck a responsive chord in the hearts of all those struggling against discrimination and domination. This evoked adverse reactions from some sections and they blamed V.P. Singh for having misled the foreign dignitary on a matter of controversy. Mandela however clarified in his Press conference that his remarks about the Mandal Commission were made because of his belief in the Gandhian principle of social justice and he did not imply to interfere in the internal matters of India. I remembered my avoiding any reference to the "German question" during my visit to West Germany the previous year.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

30

I had earlier described the manner in which the *Shilanyas* (foundation-stone laying ceremony) for building the Ram temple in Ayodhya was settled amicably by the parties agreeing to lay the foundation in an area which was not under dispute. In the general elections in November 1989, the BJP improved its membership of the Lok Sabha from a single digit to 85 and became the determining factor in the formation of the National Front government. In mid-1990, the BJP and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad announced their decision to go ahead with the construction of the temple and gave a call to people all over India to converge on Ayodhya to render *kar seva* (free service) for the construction. BJP leader L.K. Advani started a spectacular *rath yatra* from Somnath in Gujarat, to Ayodhya in U.P. Somnath was chosen as the starting point since the old Hindu temple there was desecrated by Mahmud of Ghazni in medieval history and was rebuilt in 1950, under the guidance of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. People were told that even as the Somnath temple was rebuilt after destruction by Mahmud of Ghazni, the Ram temple in Ayodhya would be rebuilt after its destruction by Babar. Wild enthusiasm gripped the people and millions thronged the route. In India people gather in large numbers to see religious processions. It is an index of the extent of idleness prevalent in the country. Apparently Advani was moved by the mass of people and in his addresses he became more and more strident. He is

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

reported to have said that even if the court decided against the temple construction, the organisers would go ahead with the building of Ram Mandir. He is also reported to have said that the courts cannot decide where Ram was born. All epics and mythology say that Ram was born in Ayodhya but none has ever specified a particular spot as the place of Ram's birth.

If V.P. Singh thought that he could win the elections with the backing of 52 percent of the backward class population by adopting the Mandal report, why should Advani not think that he could sweep the polls with the support of 80 percent of the Hindu population? The question now was whether Mandal or Mandir would win the elections.

V.P. Singh tried all his powers of persuasion with Advani to arrive at some kind of a consensus on the vexed Ayodhya issue. The Muslim community became restless when the *rath yatra* started moving closer and closer to Ayodhya. The All India Babri Masjid Action Committee started preparing plans to stop the *rath yatra*. V.P. Singh met its members and reportedly assured them that the disputed site and the Babri Masjid structure would not be allowed to be altered in any way. Meanwhile Mulayam Singh Yadav, the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, had taken a tough stand saying that *kar seva* in the disputed area would be prevented. He issued orders under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code prohibiting assembly of people in the disputed area and posted in adequate strength the Central Reserve Police Force as well as the local police to prevent any onslaught on the *masjid*. This action was criticised as anti-Hindu and pro-Muslim and Mulayam Singh Yadav was labelled "Maulana Mulayam Singh".

The *rath* had moved by this time into Bihar and was proceeding towards Uttar Pradesh. The Union Government felt that any further delay in taking action against the *yatra*

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

and allowing it to proceed to Ayodhya would lead to an uncontrollable situation and considered arresting L.K. Advani. The BJP on the other hand threatened to withdraw support to the National Front government if Advani was arrested. V.P. Singh was not daunted by this threat and on October 23, Advani was arrested by the Bihar government under the National Security Act.

During the *rath yatra*, the BJP had said that if its leader Advani was arrested, it would withdraw its support to the National Front government headed by V.P. Singh and reduce it to a minority in the Lok Sabha. So, when V.P. Singh decided to get Advani arrested, he was aware of the threat to his government. Even so he decided to brave it in order to sustain his secular image.

A delegation of the BJP led by Atal Behari Vajpayee met me on October 23 and presented a letter withdrawing support to the V.P. Singh government. This letter did not ask for any action by the President. After reading the letter, I told Vajpayee that it merely stated a fact and did not seek "any relief". Vajpayee replied that it was for me (the President) to take such action as was necessary as a consequence of reduction of the strength of the ruling party. "The ball is in my court," I told him. After a few pleasantries, the delegation withdrew.

The Prime Minister called on me about an hour later and took note of the withdrawal of support. He met me again on October 24 and said that the Cabinet had considered the situation arising out of the withdrawal of BJP support and though his own inclination was to resign, the Cabinet had decided against it. Therefore he was not tendering the resignation of the Council of Ministers.

It may be recalled that after the largest single party, the Congress(I), had declined to undertake the responsibility of forming the government, I had offered an opportunity to

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

V.P. Singh as the leader of the next largest party and did not go into what strength or support he received from others. I had asked him to establish his majority in the Lok Sabha. V.P. Singh had won a vote of confidence and was carrying on as Prime Minister. In my view he was entitled to continue in office until he was thrown out by a vote of the House. To allow the President or Governor to guess whether the ruling party enjoys the confidence of the House, is to allow free play for the likes and dislikes of holders of the impartial office. Consistent with this view I asked V.P. Singh to take a vote of confidence in the Lok Sabha as early as possible. After a detailed discussion, we fixed November 7 for taking the confidence vote.

The Rashtrapati Bhavan communique issued after the meeting with the Prime Minister read as follows:

"On the 23rd of October, 1990, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, on behalf of the BJP Parliamentary party, submitted a letter to the President stating that their party is withdrawing its support to the V.P. Singh government. The National Front has a strength of 146 members and the BJP and the Left Front have a strength of 86 and 52 members respectively. Thus the withdrawal of BJP's support will deprive the National Front government of a majority of membership of the House of the People. However, under the parliamentary system, the Council of Ministers should have a majority of members present and voting in the House and not a majority of the total membership of the House of the People. The President has, therefore, advised the Prime Minister to prove his majority in the House of the People. The Prime Minister has agreed to do so before November 7."

There was criticism of the Presidential decision largely from people who did not understand the constitutional distinction between majority of the House and in the House. Majority of the total membership of the House is one of the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

conditions for passing Constitutional amendments, impeachment of the President, removal of judges, etc. A motion of confidence or no-confidence in the Ministry is not one of the items which require to be passed by the majority of members of the House.

The BJP made it clear that notwithstanding the arrest of Advani, the march to Ayodhya would continue and construction of the temple would begin as scheduled on October 30. Hundreds and thousands of people started pouring into the vicinity of the Mandir-Masjid complex. The Government of Uttar Pradesh had also posted a large police force including the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) to meet the situation that might arise on October 30. Thousands of *kar sevaks* marched towards the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid complex in a major bid to storm the disputed shrine. The police opened fire as a result of which a number of people were killed. While the official sources underplayed the casualties, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) exaggerated the figures. In another area, the police used *lathis* to disperse the crowd of *kar sevaks* but failed to deter them. In the melee some government vehicles and a police outpost were set ablaze. All this created an atmosphere of religious frenzy and violence. While the BJP blamed Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav and V.P. Singh for the violence and suffering, the government sources blamed the BJP for violating the prohibitory orders and creating lawlessness, violence and arson.

The BJP represented to me that the members of Parliament of their party, detained in connection with the *kar seva*, should be released so that they could participate in the one-day emergency session of Parliament of November 7. When V.P. Singh met me I told him that it would be appropriate to enable members of Parliament to attend the session. It was reported that 18 members belonging to the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

BJP and the Hindu Mahasabha were in detention in connection with the *kar seva* agitation. The Prime Minister assured me of the release of detained M.P.s well before November 7.

Speculation was rife in the capital about the fate of the confidence motion and the consequences of its being lost. A number of people spoke and also wrote to me that in the surcharged communal atmosphere, a general election would be disastrous to the country and the communal flare-up, which was confined now to Ayodhya and a few other places, would spread all over the country.

It was clear to all the parties that the composition of the Lok Sabha did not enable any single party to form a stable government and some solution had to be found in the interest of the nation. So when Rajiv Gandhi came to discuss the situation with me, I asked him whether he would be able to muster sufficient strength to run a stable government for some time. He frankly admitted he did not see any such prospect. When I asked him if he was ready to face a mid-term poll, his answer was that the country was not prepared for it. Then I asked him to consider whether he would allow V.P. Singh to continue in office by abstaining from voting on the confidence motion. He had not thought of such a course and said he was thinking aloud. Realising that the problems facing the country were so acute that any person shouldering responsibility for government at such a juncture was bound to become unpopular, he remarked with the usual mischievous glint in his eye that he would prefer V.P. Singh to take that "odium". He must have discussed this idea with his colleagues and as one newspaper said, "Insiders say that in case no alternative leader emerges within the Janata Dal before November 7, the Congress may even abstain from voting on that day and allow V.P. Singh to survive for some more time." Apparently this idea did not appeal to Rajiv

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Gandhi's colleagues and he did not pursue it. Around November 3, I heard reports that Chandra Shekhar would split the Janata Dal and try to form a government with the support of the Congress.

It was becoming increasingly clear that V.P. Singh would lose the vote of confidence. I therefore started consulting legal experts regarding the courses open to me after the vote. One immediate possibility was a recommendation for the dissolution of the House by the Prime Minister. Whether the advice of a defeated Prime Minister is binding on the Crown in England, is not free from doubt. It is true that in nearly a hundred years, the Crown in the United Kingdom has never refused to accept the advice of the Prime Minister before or after his defeat in the House if he said he wanted to appeal to the people on an issue of national importance.

British authors have however argued that the sovereign was not bound to accept the advice for dissolution under the following circumstances:

(1) When Parliament was active, vibrant and capable of handling the situation;
(2) When the economy would suffer a serious setback; and
(3) Where a viable alternative government was possible. (Paraphrased from Wade and Philips, *Constitutional and Administrative Law.*)

I consulted eminent constitutional lawyers such as the Attorney-General, Soli J. Sorabjee, former Attorney-General Parasaran, K.K. Venugopal, Dr. Chitale and Dr. Singhvi. It appeared to me that it was safer to go with the British precedent of accepting the Prime Minister's recommendation rather than rely on erudite and eminent textbook writers. I was deeply worried over the chaotic consequences of a general election immediately following the horrendous

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

happenings in Ayodhya. This dilemma assailed me during the entire period of uncertainty.

Hectic behind-the-scene activity was going on between Chandra Shekhar and the Congress(I) and there were reports in newspapers about the possibility of Congress support to Chandra Shekhar's group, if he had sufficient strength to break away from the Janata Dal without attracting the anti-defection law. In this uncertain situation, I mooted the idea of forming a national government to tide over the crisis. Rajiv Gandhi's reaction was not negative but he felt I should explore the possibilities of forming a party government before taking up the idea of a national government. V.P. Singh also was not enthusiastic and the Janata Dal initially rejected the idea. When I discussed it with the Left Front parties, they showed their opposition to it. I talked to BJP, whose leader Vajpayee had himself floated this idea earlier. Vajpayee asked me whether I would be prepared to step down and assume the leadership of a national government. I told him that the President should not set this wrong and dangerous precedent as it might kindle ambitions in future Presidents to meddle and indulge in machinations against the Prime Minister. Vajpayee immediately grasped the point and withdrew his suggestion. I told him that if the concept of national government was accepted and if they wanted someone from outside the rank of party leaders, they could think of Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma, the then Vice-President, a senior, mature and learned person.

While political activities raged in the capital, a Very Low Frequency (VLF) station was about to be commissioned in Tamil Nadu. A VLF station, to help communications with submarines while under water, is a sophisticated naval facility maintained by only seven countries in the world. I had shown keen interest in the project while I was Defence Minister and laid the foundation for it in 1984 at a village in

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu.

Commissioning the station in October 1990, I praised the Indian Navy as one of the best in the world, capable of defending the long sea frontiers of the country. I cited our help to Sri Lanka and Maldives in recent times and paid compliments to the Defence Research and Development Organisation for putting through such an advanced technology mission.

Dr. Raja Ramanna, former Scientific Adviser to the Defence Minister and now Minister in the Union Government, said several crucial inputs into the project were indigenous which established India's competence in naval defence.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

31

The former Chief Justice of India P.N. Bhagwati welcomed the proposal for a national government as the only practical alternative in the circumstances. The BJP on the other hand wanted the Lok Sabha to be dissolved. Rumours started floating that a splinter group would develop in the Janata Dal which might receive the support of the Congress and stake claim for forming a government. Some newspapers described this proposal as an attempt to install a 'puppet' government by the Congress. The papers were replete with suggestions as to what I should do if the National Front government failed. I remember having said: "The office of the President is like an emergency light. It comes on automatically when there is a crisis and goes off automatically when the crisis passes" (reported in *The Times of India*).

Opposing my suggestion for a national government, people started accusing me of having ambitions to become Prime Minister and usurp authority from the duly elected representatives. This was later denied by Atal Behari Vajpayee in his book *Three Decades of Parliament*. He stated that "those who accused Mr. R. Venkataraman of being ambitious, in mooting the idea, had done grave injustice to the former President."

On November 5, the Janata Dal convened a meeting. It was reported to me by Bommai, President of the Janata Dal,

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

that 80 Lok Sabha members and 24 Rajya Sabha members attended the meeting. I was also informed by Chandra Shekhar that 57 Lok Sabha members attended his meeting at Devi Lal's place at the same time. When it was found that those who attended Chandra Shekhar's meeting would constitute more than one-third of the Janata Dal members of the Lok Sabha and therefore not attract the anti-defection law, the Janata Dal under Bommai reported to the Speaker that it had expelled 25 members of the dissident group from the party. The Speaker, without even consulting the members affected, passed orders declaring them as "unattached". By this move, the Janata Dal President sought to disqualify the remaining 32 members of the dissident group under the anti-defection law.

In the afternoon, V.P. Singh, Bommai, Fernandes, Ajit Singh and others represented to me that the splinter group under Chandra Shekhar should not be recognised by me. I told them that the issue of recognising the splinter group as a legitimate split of the party was entirely within the jurisdiction of the Speaker and that the President had no say in the matter. I asked the group whether the dissident group was formed even on the morning of November 5, before the expulsion of some members. Their explanation was that the dissidents should have attended the official meeting and expressed their dissent before moving out of the party.

November 6 was the most hectic day. From 9 in the morning till 10 in the night I had an incredible number of 26 appointments with party leaders, constitutional experts and legal luminaries. I wonder if any head of state ever had as many appointments, almost continuously, on a single day. It could well be a record for the Guinness Book. The Janata Dal which had rejected outright my suggestion for a national government now showed interest in the proposal and wanted the idea to be explored. Likewise, the BJP made a

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

brouhaha favouring the idea. Unfortunately, it was too late for me to start consultations with other parties hardly twelve hours before the voting on the confidence motion in Parliament. Nor was it feasible to postpone the special session. Had both these parties responded favourably when I first made the suggestion five days earlier, I could have explored the possibility with the major parties.

In the evening Biju Patnaik, Chief Minister of Orissa, and a member of the Janata Dal, discussed the situation with me. He faulted the Speaker for his hasty action in declaring the "expelled" members as "unattached".

On November 7, there was the usual debate on the motion of confidence. I heard parts of it from my office through the intercom. V.P. Singh spoke with dignity and projected himself as a martyr in the cause of secularism. Rajiv Gandhi, in a well documented speech, tore the Janata Dal government into shreds. Advani made a devastating speech blaming V.P. Singh for the ghastly occurrences in Ayodhya on October 30. The Left parties supported V.P. Singh wholeheartedly. Around 10.30 p.m., the Janata Dal government was defeated by 142 votes for and 346 against the confidence motion.

V.P. Singh's letter of resignation was received in the office late at night. It read, "Consequent to the voting in the Lok Sabha on the motion of confidence, I and my colleagues in the Council of Ministers hereby tender our resignations so that the process of formation of a new government could begin." I instantly noticed that V.P. Singh had not asked for dissolution of the House but desired me to take steps for the formation of a new government.

On November 8, V.P. Singh called on me at 11 a.m., as cheerful as ever. I gave him the usual letter accepting his resignation and requesting him and his colleagues to continue in office till a new Council of Ministers was

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

appointed. During all these eleven months when V.P. Singh was Prime Minister, my relations with him were cordial, friendly and mutually cooperative. It is my impression that if V.P. Singh had headed a government with a clear majority instead of depending on a conglomeration of parties mutually destructive of each other, he would have given a good administration to the country. Being dependent on parties with different objectives and ideologies, he could not withstand pressures from discordant groups.

V.P. Singh was critical of the breakaway group and insisted that Chandra Shekhar should not be called to form the government. He said Chandra Shekhar had no mandate from the people and his group came under the category of "defectors". While recognising the right of the President to call upon any one capable of providing a stable government to take over the administration, he said it was morally indefensible for splinter groups to form a government with the help of those very persons against whom they had fought in the elections.

I immediately embarked on the task of finding an alternative government. I called Rajiv Gandhi as the leader of the Opposition to meet me at 12 noon on November 8. Rajiv Gandhi informed me that notwithstanding the pressures on him from a strong group within his party, he had decided not to undertake the responsibility of forming the government and that his party would give full support to Chandra Shekhar and his group for forming the government. Events of 1979 flashed in my memory. Indira Gandhi's support to Charan Singh and her withdrawal of support within three weeks were ugly precedents in our parliamentary history although I was in the Congress Party in those days. I therefore probed the nature of the support and the minimum period it would last. Rajiv Gandhi told me that his support to Chandra Shekhar was neither temporary nor conditional

CC-0. Panini Kanya Maha Vidyalaya Collection. Digitized by eGangotri
CC-0. Panini Kanya Maha Vidyalaya Collection. Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

and that it was given to Chandra Shekhar to tide over a national crisis. He elaborated that an election in the midst of the Mandal agitation and the Mandir frenzy was unthinkable and the only way to avoid it was to give support to "the least objectionable" party in Parliament. He also said that he was working out the modalities of coordination between the Congress and Chandra Shekhar's Janata Dal (Socialist). I asked Rajiv Gandhi if this support would continue at least for one year. He replied, " Why one year? It may extend to the life of Parliament.". As I wanted to have something in writing, I handed to him a formal letter enquiring whether the Congress(I) was "able" and "willing" to provide a "viable" government and asked him to send a formal reply before 5 p.m. the same day. The reply arrived promptly at 5 p.m. stating that the Congress(I) was not staking a claim for forming the government but offered "unconditional support" to the group headed by Chandra Shekhar. Apparently Rajiv Gandhi thought that I would immediately call Chandra Shekhar to form the government as the combined strength of the Congress and its allies and the Janata Dal (S) constituted a majority.

My approach, on the other hand, was methodical and systematic. I did not want to presume that other parties would not or could not accept the offer to form the government until I had heard their views. So I called the next largest party, the BJP. I repeated the same question to Advani: whether his party was able and willing to form a viable government. I also explained to him that the leader of the Opposition had declined to undertake the responsibility and had offered unconditional support to the Janata Dal (S) of Chandra Shekhar.

Advani is one of the rare species of precise speakers. He said that in his opinion no stable government could be formed from among the parties in the Lok Sabha and

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

therefore dissolution of the House was the only appropriate course. I asked him whether in the atmosphere of the Mandal and Mandir agitations, the Pakistani infiltration in Punjab and Kashmir and the grave economic and foreign exchange crisis, a general election was in the national interest. Advani thought the Mandir issue would not aggravate communal disturbances as the *rath yatra* had been peaceful and that a lasting solution could be found only by an appeal to the people. I felt that Advani was looking at the issue from the point of view of improving his party's strength rather than from the national angle. He might have calculated that an election close on the heels of the *kar seva* in Ayodhya would create an electoral wave in his favour. I requested Advani to send me a formal reply to my letter.

The Left Front consisting of the CPI(M), the CPI, the Forward Bloc, the RSP, and others, having a strength of 60 members in the Lok Sabha, wanted to see me before I took a final decision regarding entrusting of responsibility to any party. Since I was in any event going to meet the Left Front as the next alternative in order of strength in the House, I advanced the time of the meeting. Somnath Chatterji, Indrajit Gupta and Chitta Basu met me and represented that Chandra Shekhar should not be invited to form the government as the Janata Dal (S) had no mandate from the people and also because the group was formed by defectors. They had earlier opposed the dissolution of the House but now feebly suggested fresh elections.

I pointed out that no single party in the Lok Sabha had a mandate from the people and a combination of parties could be legitimised by a vote of the House. I also drew their attention to the fact that the President had no authority to decide whether a group consisted of "defectors" or not, that it was completely within the jurisdiction of the Speaker and that until the Speaker passed orders against a group as

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

defectors, the President had to act on the basis that they were legitimate members of the House. When I asked them whether the Left Front was in a position to undertake the responsibility for administration, they immediately declined. I wanted them to send me a formal reply.

Retired Chief Justice of India Bhagwati called on me and gave his advice regarding the operation of the anti-defection law against the dissident group of Chandra Shekhar. He was of the view that the moment one-third or more members of a legislature party formed a separate group, the split took place and any subsequent action by the parent party would have no effect. He brought me a paper expounding the opinion endorsed by Dr. L.M. Singhvi, a constitutional expert.

By 9 p.m. on November 8, all major political parties had declined to shoulder the responsibility for administration. Chandra Shekhar had already staked his claim to form the government with the help of the Congress(I), the AIADMK and a few others. He was waiting in the wings, hoping the call would come and was annoyed at the delay. I had not thought of offering the opportunity to Chandra Shekhar so far and I was going to give serious thought to it only after the others had declined. I wanted to ruminate over the matter only in the night. Nevertheless, I gave time to Chandra Shekhar to see me at 12 noon on November 9 in response to his letter.

On the night of November 8, I studied all my options. The first, dissolving the Lok Sabha, did not appeal to me. It was my view that with all the agitations over the Mandal report and Mandir construction, there would be widespread violence and the elections would be neither fair nor free.

I suddenly realised the possibility of another constitutional hurdle. V.P. Singh, while tendering his resignation, had not asked for dissolution of the Lok Sabha. I secretly

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

congratulated myself on being saved the onerous responsibility of deciding whether the recommendation of a defeated Prime Minister was binding on the President. I knew that whatever the decision, I would be criticised by those holding a contrary view. But this had now proved to be a blessing since I now found that the President could not dissolve the House without a recommendation by the Prime Minister. The normal procedure is that the Prime Minister sends a recommendation to the President, and the President's secretariat examines and puts up the file for decision. The President cannot, on his own responsibility, dissolve the House. If he had such a power, he could distort democracy by dissolving the Lok Sabha at his whim, subject only to being impeached after a new House was constituted. While the question whether the advice of a defeated Prime Minister is binding on the President is a moot point, I had no doubt in my mind that the President had no power to dissolve the Lok Sabha except on the recommendation of the Prime Minister. If extraordinary circumstances necessitate dissolution of the House, he must appoint a person as Prime Minister for the purpose of tendering the advice for dissolution.

Having taken the view that dissolution of the Lok Sabha was not desirable in the national interest, I considered the claims of Chandra Shekhar for forming the government. It appeared to me that a small party, supported by a very large one from outside, would be a case of the tail wagging the head. My query to Rajiv Gandhi whether he could form a coalition had drawn a strongly negative answer. It was also clear that Chandra Shekhar would not agree to be a junior partner in such a coalition. Personally I have a high regard for Chandra Shekhar, for his rational views, progressive approach to the nation's problems and his integrity. I would have had no problem in choosing him if he had a better

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

following than a bare tenth of the membership of the Lok Sabha. The dilemma became oppressive and I decided to take a plunge for good or bad and to entrust the government to Chandra Shekhar and trust in God to save the Constitution and the country.

When on November 9, Chandra Shekhar met me he looked grim. Throughout my talks with leaders, though I had countered some of their arguments, I never gave an indication of what I would do. I could not, since I had not myself reached a decision. Nor did I call Chandra Shekhar on November 8 along with other party leaders, causing him, quite unitentionally, much anxiety.

When Chandra Shekhar called, I met him with the utmost cordiality. There was no need to ask him the routine question whether he was able and willing to provide a viable government as he had already staked his claim to do so. So I talked to him about the details of the support from other parties which Chandra Shekhar had furnished the previous day and which I had verified with the Lok Sabha Secretariat. I asked him if he was assured of the support of the Congress just to compare his reaction with what Rajiv Gandhi had told me earlier. He said with quiet dignity that he trusted Rajiv Gandhi's assurances. He also mentioned the arrangements he was going to have with the Congress(I) for coordination between them. Later I formally invited Chandra Shekhar to form the government and prove his majority in the House of the People on or before November 20. It was also agreed that Chandra Shekhar would be sworn in as Prime Minister on Saturday, November 10, at 11 a.m.

The same evening the following communique was issued by Rashtrapati Bhavan:

> Consequent on the fall of the National Front government headed by Shri V.P. Singh, the President asked the Leader of the Opposition and the Congress (I) whether

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

he was able and willing to form a viable government. The Congress(I) did not stake a claim for forming the government but offered unconditional support to Shri Chandra Shekhar.

Thereafter, the President sounded the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Left Front whether they would be able and willing to form a viable government. On both the parties expressing their inability to undertake the responsibility, the President enquired from Shri Chandra Shekhar if he was in a position to form a viable government. Shri Chandra Shekhar responded to the offer and produced evidence of support to his group from the Congress(I), AIADMK, Bahujan Samaj Party, Muslim League, J and K National Conference, Kerala Congress(M), Shiromani Akali Dal (Panthic) and a few Independent members.

The President is satisfied *prima facie* that the group headed by Shri Chandra Shekhar with the support of other parties as mentioned above has the strength to form a viable government.

The President is of the considered opinion that it will not be in the national interest to plunge the country into a general election at this time (a view shared by many political parties and by the public) and that every effort should be made to provide the country with a reasonably stable government.

The President has therefore invited Shri Chandra Shekhar to form the government and prove his majority in the House of the People on or before 30 November, 1990.

The manner in which the difficult constitutional crisis was handled elicited warm appreciation. The procedure followed in arriving at the decision was described as

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

"impeccable". Jurists like Justice Khanna, Noorani, and Venugopal, to name only a few, acclaimed the process as totally in conformity with the Constitution. Many agreed with my decision to avoid an election as eminently wise. However, there was also some sharp criticism that calling "defectors" to form a government was immoral and against the spirit of democracy.

In my view, the President is not a Public Service Commission examining the merits of candidates for the Prime Minister's office. He has only to satisfy himself whether the person chosen as Prime Minister has *prima facie* strength in the Lok Sabha to carry on the government and is free from any proven constitutional disability. To allow the President to stray from this narrow path would lead to a distortion of the Constitution. On balance, there was far more welcome to my solution of the political crisis than criticism.

When the Rashtrapati Bhavan staff started making arrangements for swearing in the Prime Minister at the Ashoka Hall, a request for 400 invitation cards came from the Prime Minister-designate and for 300 cards from Devi Lal. Besides, there were about three hundred customary invitees according to protocol. Mild remonstrance by my staff that the Ashoka Hall could accommodate only 400 persons did not evoke any response. When the matter was reported to me, I did not want to start with a difference of opinion with the new government though as a stickler for propriety and dignity I was not inclined to admit a crowd to the ceremony. I therefore thought of holding the function in the Central Hall of Parliament. I was told that though there were precedents for swearing in the President in the Central Hall, there was none for swearing in a Prime Minister. My staff also pointed out that the customary tea after the ceremony could not be arranged by Rashtrapati Bhavan. Finally I decided that the ceremony would take place in the forecourt of Rashtrapati

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Bhavan in order to accommodate the large number of supporters of Chandra Shekhar and Devi Lal.

The function of swearing in Chandra Shekhar as Prime Minister and Devi Lal as Deputy Prime Minister looked more like a public meeting than a solemn national occasion. Shouts of *jai*, never before heard in such dignified functions, rent the air. I was unhappy but still kept a smiling face and went through with it.

Later, Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar told me that he wished to take a vote of confidence in the Lok Sabha on November 19. However, the Speaker, on a complaint from a member of the Janata Dal against 30 members including Devi Lal who had voted against V.P. Singh's ministry on November 7, in violation of the party whip, sent show cause notices to them under the anti-defection law calling for an explanation within a week's time. This was rather unusual. Normally three or four weeks' time is given to parties to submit their explanations. The Prime Minister suspected that the Speaker might disqualify these members before the date of the Lok Sabha meeting and thereby frustrate the government. The Prime Minister, who was greatly perturbed, told me on telephone that he had two options, i.e., one of going to the Supreme Court for judicial intervention and the other of summoning the House before expiry of the notice of disqualification issued to the members. He said he preferred the latter course and asked me if I would agree. I replied that it was entirely within the competence of the Prime Minister to choose a course of administrative action and that I would accept his formal proposal. On the afternoon of November 10, the file recommending prorogation of the current session of Lok Sabha and summoning a new session on November 16, came to me and I approved it.

If the Janata Dal was smart in trying to disqualify Chandra Shekhar's supporters, the latter outwitted it by

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

summoning the House earlier and thereby preventing precipitate action against his supporters. The new rule is, "Anything is fair in war and politics."

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

32

I had earlier planned a visit to Japan from November 11 to 13, to participate in the coronation ceremony of Emperor Akihito. The political crisis upset the plan and I had to make a one-day visit on November 12, the day of the formal coronation. It was in the fitness of things that I made the trip, although it was only for 24 hours. The world would have interpreted my absence as a breakdown of the constitutional machinery in India. Almost every head of state whom I happened to meet at the coronation ceremony was curious to know about the crisis in India. I replied that the crisis had been resolved without any hitch and that a Prime Minister had been appointed the previous day. During my brief stay I received calls from President Ershad of Bangladesh, President Soares of Portugal and President Iliescu of Rumania.

Ershad was fully conversant with the happenings in India and naturally plied me with questions about the new Prime Minister. I assured him that India's policy of promoting good neighbourly relations would continue under the new government and that in these matters there was a national consensus. Referring to the river waters dispute between Bangladesh and India I said that the matter should be settled by mutual negotiations and that it should not be globalised. Though Ershad formally expressed his agreement he was indulging in propaganda in many European

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Rantalab Jammu

capitals accusing India of flooding Bangladesh through its own schemes. It may be recalled that during my visit to Europe in 1987, the Queen of Netherlands had mentioned to me the complaints of Bangladesh. Ershad expressed his readiness to accommodate the Chakma refugees but felt that the problem was being made intractable by the Left parties who were aggravating the trouble. When Ershad enquired about the stability of the new government, I referred to the support being garnered from other parties and expressed confidence about its ability to carry on without much difficulty.

Portuguese President Soares, whom I met earlier in the year, told me that the vexed question of the return of gold jewels to the Goan depositors had been satisfactorily worked out and that it was ready for implementation. When I enquired about his state visit to India, he said that presidential elections in Portugal had been scheduled in the first week of January and that he would plan a visit in February or March the next year.

The President of Rumania explained the problems faced by the new government after the overthrow of the Ceasescu regime. He was keen on developing trade and political relations with India. He hoped that the democratic process set in motion in East Europe would gather momentum and also lead to greater integration with the rest of Europe.

The enthronement ceremony of Emperor Akihito started at 1 p.m. with clock-work precision. The liaison officers brought the dignitaries to their seats. There was silence in that distinguished assembly. The ceremony was tediously slow. First, the members of the royal family marched up the elevated platform in measured small steps and they were followed by a select group of dignitaries. Then curtains opened revealing the King on one throne and the Queen on another, a little apart. The King read out a short speech pledging to serve the people. The Prime Minister felicitated

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

the King thereafter. The return procession started in a tantalisingly slow motion. The whole ceremony was very impressive. There was no music, no chants of any scriptures and the whole function was over in thirty minutes.

The Emperor's banquet was a glittering function. The King and Queen shook hands with over 300 guests and exchanged a word or two with each of them. When I was introduced, His Majesty said he was happy that I could make the visit. Apparently he had at the back of his mind the political crisis that India was passing through. When I was introduced to members of the royal family, Crown Prince Naruhito, who visited India in 1986 at my invitation as Vice-President, said a few words about his pleasant stay in India. Down in the line was Prime Minister Kaifu, who had met me earlier in the year during his visit to India. A meeting with him had been scheduled for the next day but I excused myself as I had to return to Delhi the very next morning.

Seated around me at the dinner were the Presidents of Iceland, Maldives and a few other states. The President of Maldives enquired about the procedure adopted by me for choosing the Prime Minister in a difficult situation where no party had a majority. In this discussion, the President of Iceland also joined. I asked her whether the Iceland parliament had faced similar situations with no party being able to form the government and if so how such a situation had been tackled there. She explained that the President would call upon the political parties to form a viable coalition during which time, she would appoint a group of senior citizens to carry on the routine administration. This, she said, forced the parties to come up with a solution as otherwise the Council of Senior Citizens would continue in office. I told her that in my country the parties would rather ask for a dissolution of the House than form a coalition. I thought there was a lot of sense and substance in Iceland's practice

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

and even though a very small country, it could serve as a model.

There was a cultural show for about thirty minutes during which guests moved freely meeting other heads of state and governments. I met the King of Bhutan, and the Presidents of Cyprus, the F.R.G, Namibia, Maldives and Pakistan.

Although it was a well established principle of parliamentary democracy that a ministry facing a vote of confidence or carrying on the administration after defeat in the Lok Sabha shall not take important decisions relating to policy or involving heavy financial commitment, the Janata Dal took a number of such decisions relating to industrial licences and industrial collaborations. For instance, over one hundred licences for setting up sugar mills were stated to have been approved by the Industries Minister. I called for those files for information. There were reports in the Press that several other schemes had similarly been approved and a number of official postings made in the period. Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar mentioned these things to me and said that he was going to review all orders passed during the period October 23 to November 7.

Though Chandra Shekhar obtained a vote of confidence with 269 votes in favour and 204 against, he had immense problems in forming the Cabinet. According to reports, Devi Lal wanted a whole block of ministers from his faction. Pulls and pressures harassed the Prime Minister. Finally he told me that he would finalise the Cabinet and that it could be sworn in on November 19. Then it was again postponed to November 20. Again, the Prime Minister sent word to me on November 20 that the swearing-in ceremony could be held at 9 a.m. the next day as he had to leave for Male to attend the SAARC Summit the same day. Throughout the night, the Rashtrapati Bhavan Secretariat was waiting for the list of

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

ministers. But the list arrived only at 7 a.m. on the morning of November 21.

For ceremonies at Rashtrapati Bhavan, elaborate arrangements have to be made and it requires at least two to three days. Places have to be reserved for the media, arrangements made for seating VIPs and other invitees and separate seating for the ministers to be sworn. That is why functions at Rashtrapati Bhavan seldom begin before 10 a.m. On this occasion, the media was asked to take their places one hour before the function and actually a number of persons had taken their seats by 8 a.m. Others who came after the appointed hour could not be admitted and were denied entry by the security personnel. A scuffle ensued when some of the media personnel, trying to scale the side walls to gain entry were thwarted by security.

I was waiting in my apartments for the ADC to come and escort me to the Ashoka Hall. Even seven minutes after the scheduled time, I was told that some of the ministers-designate had not arrived. I suggested that we should proceed with the ceremony and that absentee ministers could be sworn in later. When I arrived at the Ashoka Hall I observed a lot of confusion. I thought that supporters of various ministers were indulging in cheering and acclaiming their favourite ministers the way it had been done in the forecourt when the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister were sworn in a few days earlier. I therefore gave permission to commence the solemn ceremony and started swearing in the ministers. But what had really happened was that the media men who had forced their way into the Ashoka Hall were gesticulating and protesting and were trying to move to vantage positions for taking photos while the ceremony was going on. They were physically pushing the staff who were holding them back. I also saw some people banging the glass panes of the Ashoka Hall doors. Never before in the annals of

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

the ceremonial Ashoka Hall had such an unseemly demonstration been made and slogans raised against the Prime Minister with cries of "shame". After the ceremony when pressmen accosted the Prime Minister and complained about the ill-treatment meted out to them, he was reported to have said, "What about the broken panes, all the slogans? That is not good." He also said that he could not suggest to the President every time to break tradition, apparently referring to his swearing-in ceremony, in the forecourt where a bigger crowd had been accommodated. I was shocked at the sordid erosion of etiquette and manners in the new generation. Even assuming that some media persons were wrongly denied admission, and granting that force was used against journalists who tried to get past the barricade, the behaviour of some of them at the Ashoka Hall was deplorable. It was like defiling the church because of wrath against the priest. One would like to compare this incident with the observation made by Neil Kinnock, Leader of the Opposition in U.K. When I had made a reference to South Africa in my speech at the Queen's Banquet, he said that he wanted to applaud but had refrained from it because it was against convention to do so.

The next day's newspapers were full of stories of newsmen being assaulted and humiliated at Rashtrapati Bhavan. There was a clamour for an enquiry which I readily accepted and when it was further suggested that the enquiry must be made by a Supreme Court Judge, sitting or retired, I immediately conceded it. I would have even agreed to an enquiry by a judge of the "International Court", as I was totally distressed at the behaviour in the hallowed precincts of the Ashoka Hall and wanted someone to condemn it. Many felt that all these things did not augur well for Chandra Shekhar.

The choice of the Chiefs of the Army, Navy and Air Force Staff is made by the government after assessment of their

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

service records by the Defence Minister and Prime Minister. Admiral Nadkarni, Chief of the Naval Staff, was to retire on November 30, 1990. Earlier Nadkarni had extended the services of Vice-Admiral Jain who was retiring before the CNS so that he would be eligible for consideration for the post of Admiral when time for choice came. This was nothing new. Similar action had been taken in the case of Air Vice-Marshal Katre and Vice-Admiral Tahiliani. The natural expectation therefore was that Vice-Admiral Jain might be promoted as CNS over the next senior Vice-Admiral Ramdas.

Prime Minister V.P. Singh had discussed the matter with me and said that he preferred Vice-Admiral Ramdas for the post of Chief. I had told V.P. Singh that I had no personal preferences and that he could communicate his proposal for my approval. On receipt of the file I perused the records and approved it. After Chandra Shekhar became Prime Minister he asked me whether the appointment of Ramdas could be reconsidered. He also sent Defence Secretary Vora to explain the reasons to me. I told the Defence Secretary that orders for appointment of Ramdas had already been issued and gazetted and any attempt to overturn the decision, except on very serious charges of fraud, misrepresentation or suppression of material facts, would seriously damage the morale of the services. I also expressed doubts whether an order already passed could be revoked. Vora enquired if Nadkarni could be given an extension for one month and the matter reviewed. I replied that it would set a bad precedent and every Chief of Staff would try to wangle an extension in future.

I also felt that a Chief on extension would suffer a serious loss of prestige as the officers and men would look upon him as a lame duck chief. On November 27, two Cabinet ministers called on me and discussed this issue. I explained to them the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

need to maintain high standards of discipline in the armed forces and also the sanctity of a decision. I cautioned them that there would be public suspicion of political interference if the appointment was changed with a change in government.

On November 28, I hosted a dinner for the retiring Navy Chief. As usual I invited the CNS-designate, all Chiefs of Staff and retired Chiefs resident in Delhi. When my staff asked whether there would be any embarrassment in inviting Ramdas, I said that as long as his appointment remained in force he was entitled to attend. Ramdas took over as Chief of the Naval Staff on November 30 and except for stray references in the Press, the matter died out.

In the Assembly elections in Pondicherry held in November 1989, the DMK, in alliance with the Janata Dal and the CPI, won 16 of the 30 seats. D. Ramachandran of the DMK became the Chief Minister and with the support of three nominated members, carried on the administration comfortably. However, after the split in the Janata Dal in November 1990, three of the four JD members joined the JD (S) and withdrew their support to the DMK alliance, reducing the strength of the Government. The Speaker, who was a Janata Dal member, disqualified under the anti-defection law two of those who joined the JD (S) even though they constituted 50 percent of the JD party.

The Lt. Governor of Pondicherry, Har Swaroop Singh, told the Chief Minister that he was convinced that the Chief Minister had lost his majority in the House and that he should either parade members supporting him at Raj Nivas or produce letters from supporting members on December 24. The Chief Minister declined to parade members at Raj Nivas but agreed to prove his majority in the House on the scheduled date. The Lt. Governor, however, insisted on either presenting supporting members before him or

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

producing their signed statements of support. Even the plea of the Chief Minister to advance the date of the Assembly session to prove his strength was negatived. I came to know all this on December 23. I asked my Secretary Murari to convey to the Cabinet Secretary and the Home Secretary that the Lt. Governor should observe the convention I had established in V.P. Singh's case of deciding the majority on floor of the House and not by counting of heads elsewhere. The Lt. Governor called the Chief Minister at 2.30 p.m. on December 24 and informed him that he acceded to the suggestion that the issue of majority be tested on the floor of the House on December 27.

Meanwhile, the leader of the Congress Party in the Pondicherry Assembly, M.O.H. Farooq, met the Speaker and represented that the order of disqualification of Janata Dal members be revoked. The Speaker accepted the plea and cancelled his earlier order. Finding that the disqualification of two members had been removed, the Chief Minister tendered his resignation on December 27 before the Assembly met. In these circumstances, the Lt. Governor recommended President's Rule in the Union Territory and suspension of the Assembly for six months, which I approved.

I had earlier dealt with the action of the Lok Sabha Speaker declaring 25 members of the Janata Dal as unattached. After formation of the Chandra Shekhar ministry, the Speaker, on a complaint from the Janata Dal, issued a notice to the other 30 members who, along with the unattached 25, claimed to have 'split' from the party to show cause against their disqualification under the anti-defection law. In addition, seven other JD members, including V.C. Shukla who had voted on November 7 in favour of the motion expressing confidence in V.P. Singh, switched over and voted for the confidence motion in favour of Chandra

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Shekhar on November 16, contrary to the whip issued to them as members of JD. The Speaker issued show cause notice to these members as well. He did not issue any notice to the 25 members whom he had already declared as unattached.

Against the order of the Speaker declaring the 25 members as unattached and against the expulsion of those members by V.P. Singh, some members filed a writ petition in the Delhi High Court and prayed for stay of these actions. The Delhi High Court, without granting a stay, expressed the hope that pending disposal of the writ petition, no adverse action would be taken by the Speaker. The High Court issued notices to the Speaker and V.P. Singh. The Speaker refused to accept the jurisdiction of the High Court in such matters and declined to accept notice. Pressures were, however, mounted on him to give his ruling on the applications filed by the JD for disqualification of several members.

On December 21, Speaker Rabi Ray called on me and said that he was talking to me "in confidence" to understand the correct legal position regarding the tangle in Parliament over the disqualification issue. I replied I would try to explain the legal aspect to the best of my ability. To his query about the split of 52 members of the JD (S) I referred to him the opinion I had received from Justice Bhagwati and L.M. Singhvi that the relevant consideration for determination of the split was the actual time when it took place and not the time it was reported to the Speaker. It was for him to come to a conclusion whether the splinter group was formed on the morning of November 5 as claimed by them. As regards those who voted in violation of the whip on November 16, I said that they might be hit by the anti-defection legislation. He could either decide himself or refer the matter to the Privileges Committee at his discretion.

On the morning of January 3, 1991, there were reports in

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

newspapers that there was an altercation between the Speaker and Subramaniam Swamy, Minister for Commerce and Law in the Speaker's chamber, in the course of which it was reported that Swamy told the Speaker that he should withhold his ruling on disqualification of members in deference to the wishes of the Delhi High Court. The report said when the Speaker pointed out that courts had no jurisdiction in this matter, Swamy "threatened" to "arrest" the Speaker for contempt of court. Present at the meeting were Satyaprakash Malaviya, Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, and Rangarajan Kumarmangalam, Congress M.P. The Prime Minister told me that on enquiring about it the Speaker informed him that it was not a serious matter and the remark was only banter.

However, when the Lok Sabha met on January 3, there was uproar and a vociferous demand for the resignation of Swamy and also the JD (S) government. Some wanted Swamy to be punished for contempt. Attempts by the Prime Minister to assuage the feelings of the House were of no avail. Even the Speaker's plea that the incident should not be blown up, was angrily rejected by members. Swamy, who came to the House a little later, was shouted down and not allowed to speak. As is usual in such situations, the House was adjourned from time to time and finally before time, without transacting any business.

The same evening a ten-member delegation led by George Fernandes, Janata Dal M.P., called on me and demanded dismissal of the ministry and of Swamy. This was a meaningless exercise as the President is not the employer of the Prime Minister or his colleagues, who can dismiss them for misconduct. As I have repeatedly said, the President cannot dismiss a Prime Minister who enjoys the confidence of the House. Corrective action, if any, rests only with the legislature. Yet the farce of presenting such

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

memoranda to the President continues.

On January 5, Swamy met me and gave his version of the event. He said that he never "threatened" to "arrest" the Speaker but had only said that if the Speaker took any decision when the matter was pending before the High Court, he would be guilty of contempt of court and liable to be arrested. I pointed out to Swamy that mere pendency of a matter before a court did not operate as a stay of the proceedings and that his contention that the Speaker could be guilty of contempt of court was untenable. It is a pity that a country which produced legal luminaries like Motilal Nehru, C.R. Das, Ambedkar, Katju and Alladi should have a Law Minister without qualifications in law.

In the Delhi High Court which was hearing the writ petitions, Attorney-General G. Ramaswamy filed an affidavit on behalf of the government stating that the Speaker, acting in matters relating to defection of members, was functioning as a quasi-judicial authority and was subject to judicial review. The Delhi High Court issued a formal stay order on the Speaker directing him not to recognise the expulsion of 25 members and not to proceed with the petitions for disqualification pending the decision of the High Court. It also issued a similar order to Viswanath Pratap Singh staying the expulsion of the 25 members from the party. The House took serious note of this order and protests were raised by all sections. The Speaker said he was declining to accept the notice sent to him and that he was proceeding with examination of the petitions filed before him as the appropriate authority concerned with it. The entire House endorsed this stand.

Members also objected vociferously to the filing of an affidavit by the Attorney-General contrary to the known stand of the government on the question of judicial review of the Speaker's action under the anti-defection law. The Prime

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Minister had a tough time in extricating himself from a situation in which the entire House, including his supporters, mainly the Congress (I), was against him. He undertook to modify the affidavit before the court. On this assurance, the Leader of the Opposition, L.K. Advani, who had moved the adjournment motion, withdrew it.

Rajiv Gandhi met me on January 4 and said that on the issue of finality of Speaker's decision in matters relating to defection and on the supremacy of Parliament, he was very firm and would have voted with the Opposition if Chandra Shekhar had not diffused the situation by the undertaking before the House.

The Delhi High Court withdrew its stay order against the Speaker on the next day and acknowledged the Speaker's authority, but confirmed the stay order against V.P. Singh regarding the expulsion of 25 members. Sometime in January the Speaker pronounced his decision on the issue of defection in an admirably balanced and objective manner. He said that there was a doubt as to the exact date and time when the split took place; and that he was giving benefit of doubt to the affected persons and thereby recognised the JD (S) consisting of 57 members included in the first list submitted by Chandra Shekhar.

The Speaker disqualified seven members, including V.C. Shukla and four other ministers, for violation of the party's whip on November 16, 1990. When the news came out, the Prime Minister somewhat hastily reacted that the disqualified ministers need not resign. On January 12, the Prime Minister met me and apprised me of the situation. I told him that as a matter of propriety, the disqualified ministers should resign and then it was for the Prime Minister to decide whether they should be reappointed as ministers, subject to their election to either House of Parliament within six months.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

There was a hue and cry in Parliament against the disqualified ministers continuing in office and appeals were made to me to dismiss them. Rajiv Gandhi, who met me later, also insisted that the disqualified ministers should vacate office.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

33

In my Republic Day address to the nation I bemoaned the absence of a democratic temper in the country even after four decades of running democratic institutions. Speaking on the occasion I said, "Rancour, recrimination and readiness to give and take offence, are edging the spirit of friendliness, courtesy and mutual regard for each other. Some of the utterances of rival political parties give the impression that they are no longer competitors in the endeavour to serve the nation but are bitter enemies drawn in battle array." I pointed out that in mature democracies, heated debates did not engender bitterness among legislators and that personal relations did not get marred by heated exchanges in legislatures. I wanted the courtesy of hearing the other side to be scrupulously observed if we wished to make a success of democratic institutions.

Referring to the change in the composition of Parliament in recent times I said:

> Brought up on the purely Westminster model, some political analysts have been dismayed by the fact that instead of bipolarity with some fringe parties at the outer periphery, we now have in our Parliament a many-hued spectrum. There is, in my view, no need for dismay on this score. There are numerous examples of minority or coalition governments working with stability and suc-

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

cess in different parts of the globe.

We in India may have to adapt ourselves to such a situation if it arises and learn to work together in the common cause, shedding, in the process, rigid party positions. In a multi-party political system, we may not be able to avoid coalition governments in the interest of the nation. I wanted to give the message to the nation that it should reconcile itself to coalition governments in the future and that single party majorities were things of the past in a multi-party system.

I also stressed the need for stringent economy. I cancelled my travel plans and soujourn in Simla and Hyderabad in the year 1991.

I was happy that all political parties welcomed my address though with a reservation that it should not be used as justification for a minuscule party government as in the existing case. Advani of the Bharatiya Janata Party said that the President's basic thesis was "unquestionable". Inderjit Gupta of the CPI agreed with the President that the country had now entered a phase in which single party rule might not be possible. Most newspapers welcomed the address saying that coalition governments could provide an answer for "hung" parliaments in the future.

A feeble response came from the Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar that he was agreeable to forming coalitions. Also, some speculation appeared in the Press on such a possibility. But nothing concrete emerged as no party was prepared to take the initiative. A few suggestions were made that I should take steps to bring about a stable coalition. But I resisted the thought as I felt that my function as President stopped with making the suggestion and did not extend to meddling with party matters.

The DMK government in Tamil Nadu was elected to

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

power in January 1989 as a result of multi-cornered elections in which the two factions of the AIADMK, the Congress(I) and the DMK stood independently. Securing 32.2 percent only of the votes polled, the DMK secured 145 of the 235 seats in the Assembly. Later, during the parliamentary election in November 1989, the Congress and the AIADMK contested together in an electoral alliance, and won 38 out of 39 seats and the DMK did not win even a single seat.

In 1977, the Janata ministry initiated a strange doctrine that the parliamentary election proved that the state ministries had lost the confidence of the people and dismissed nine Congress ministries in one stroke. The then acting President B.D. Jatti had to approve the proposal as, under Article 74 of the Constitution, he was bound by the advice of the Council of Ministers. The Janata precedent was followed by the Congress (I) when it returned to power in 1980. It dismissed a number of non-Congress state ministries, including that of M.G. Ramachandran in Tamil Nadu, at the instance of the DMK, the Congress alliance partner in the 1980 Lok Sabha elections.

In my view, neither the Janata precedent nor the Congress acceptance of the Janata doctrine was politically sound. Under the Constitution the state ministries are responsible to their elected legislature and the mere fact that another party got a majority in Parliament would not take away the right of ministries to continue. In a federal constitution, different political parties could come to power at the Centre and in the states and the mere fact that one party got a majority in Parliament could not be treated as the loss of confidence in the state ministries.

It is the practice of the Intelligence Bureau (IB) to brief the President periodically on the law and order situation in the country and for the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) to keep me posted on situations with international ramifi-

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

cations. The IB had briefed me from time to time on Kashmir, Punjab, the North-Eastern States and Tamil Nadu. In one of its briefings it told me that the LTTE was infiltrating into Tamil Nadu and creating a law and order situation. It was reported that the LTTE had made Tamil Nadu the base of its operations and was actively indulging in smuggling petroleum products and food articles and also in sale of arms to other anti-social elements. In particular, mention was made of its supply of AK-47 rifles to naxalites in Andhra Pradesh and to the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) in Assam. Though I had passed on this information to both Prime Minister V.P. Singh and Home Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, they did not respond, presumably because the DMK was a constituent of the National Front.

A few people living in the coastal areas of Thanjavur gave me accounts of intimidation and extortion of money by persons calling themselves LTTE and the indifference of the local police to taking action against them. Failure of the state government to take firm action to trace the assassins of the leader of another Sri Lankan Tamil organisation Padmanabha and his associates, was cited as an instance of the soft attitude of the state government towards the LTTE.

After formation of the Chandra Shekhar government, the Congress and the AIADMK mounted pressure for dismissal of the DMK Government on the plea of breakdown of law and order in Tamil Nadu.

Chandra Shekhar consulted me on the situation in Tamil Nadu. I advised him not to rely on representations of political parties but to have an assessment by the RAW and the IB independently and come to a conclusion on the activities of the LTTE and the attitude of the DMK government towards it. Shortly thereafter when I visited Tamil Nadu, I told Karunanidhi that he should not only take firm action against the LTTE but such action should also be

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

demonstrable. Karunanidhi responded by saying that he was doing his best to contain the LTTE. This was, however, at variance with his refusal to receive the IPKF personnel on their return from Sri Lanka, on the plea that the IPKF had killed Tamils in Jaffna and therefore did not deserve a reception. Only the Governor received the forces at Madras harbour.

During the second week of January, the pressure on Chandra Shekhar for removal of the DMK ministry intensified. The TNCC President, the leader of the AIADMK and a section of the people carried on an intensive campaign for removal of the DMK ministry.

On January 30 at the Martyrs' Day function at Rajghat, Chandra Shekhar expressed his desire to speak to me urgently, so I asked him to meet me immediately at Rashtrapati Bhavan. He informed me that he had received the intelligence agencies' reports on Tamil Nadu and wanted to take action on them. I told him that he could submit his formal proposals in this regard.

Later in the evening, the Prime Minister said that he wanted the Presidential proclamation issued the same day and that papers would be reaching me late at night. He also said that since the Governor of Tamil Nadu had declined to recommend dismissal of the DMK Ministry, he was proceeding under the provisions of the Constitution which enabled the Central Government to act either on the advice of the Governor or 'otherwise'.

Around 9 p.m., Opposition leaders V.P. Singh, Dandavate, Bommai, Dinesh Goswami, Upendra, Unnikrishnan and a few others wanted to see me urgently. When I met them at 9.30 p.m., they represented that dismissal of the Tamil Nadu ministry was illegal, immoral and unconstitutional. I told them that I had been informed that such an action was contemplated but up to the time of talking to them I had not

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

received the proposal. I pointed out my constitutional obligation to accept the advice of the Cabinet. Some members realised this aspect but said that I might "advise" the government against such action.

Within a few minutes of the departure of the Opposition leaders, papers relating to the issue of a proclamation imposing President's Rule and dissolving the Legislative Assembly of Tamil Nadu were put up to me. I went through the file carefully. The report contained a recital that the Union Government was of the view that the DMK Ministry was reluctant to deal firmly with extremists in the state with international links. The Union Government had relied on reports of the Intelligence agencies for reaching the conclusion that a situation had arisen where constitutional government could not be carried on in Tamil Nadu.

I pondered over the constitutional position. That the Union government could act under Article 356 either on the receipt of a report from the Governor or "otherwise" was beyond dispute, and absence of a report from the Governor was not an infirmity. In fact, the Janata government, which dismissed nine state ministries in 1977, acted without reports of the Governors. In any event, it was my firm conviction that the President was not an appellate or supervisory authority over the Prime Minister and that it was my duty to act on the advice of the Cabinet so long as the proposed action was not violative of the provisions of the Constitution. In my view it was for Parliament to go into the merits of the decision. I therefore issued the proclamation dismissing the DMK ministry immediately.

There was an uproar against dismissal of the DMK ministry by the National Front leaders. The press also joined in the condemnation. I felt that the hysteria was both exaggerated and biased for it was not the first time that President's Rule had been imposed without a recom-

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

mendation of the Governor. The Janata Dal had itself set a glorious precedent in 1977. Nor can it be said there was no ground at all for imposing President's Rule in the light of reports of the Intelligence agencies and the reported reluctance of the DMK ministry to deal firmly with extremists having international links. Admiral Ramdas, Chief of the Naval Staff, after a visit to Tamil Nadu, indicted the government for releasing offenders apprehended and handed over to civilian authorities by naval personnel. The Press was hostile to Chandra Shekhar's government from the very beginning and seized the opportunity to play up the dismissal.

There was sharp criticism of the President too for accepting the recommendation of the Cabinet. Public memory is short. It was only a few months earlier that V.P. Singh, as Prime Minister, had insisted on my imposing President's Rule in Karnataka and for removing Veerendra Patil. Earlier, Buta Singh as Home Minister, had urged me to dismiss the Bommai government in Karnataka without a floor test. The President had on all such occasions observed constitutional propriety and acted on the advice of the Council of Ministers.

The President of West Germany Dr. Richard von Weizsäcker and his wife Marianne paid a return visit to India for a week from February 28. It was not easy for the German President to leave his country during the aftermath of the Gulf crisis. It was indeed a measure of his regard for and interest in India that he undertook the scheduled visit. I have already described Weizsäcker's keen interest in India, his broad sympathy for it and understanding of its problems. He had earlier mentioned the special relationship between India and Germany and the scope for greater cooperation in areas of industrial development, science and technology and culture.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Weizsäcker was accorded a warm welcome at a ceremony in the forecourt of Rashtrapati Bhavan. In the night, a glittering state banquet was hosted by me to the visiting President. Welcoming him, I expressed deep appreciation of the cooperation and assistance extended to India by Germany and dealt with the scope for further expansion of trade between the two countries. I also welcomed the proposal for establishment of a consultative group to serve the needs of a long term perspective bilateral relations.

In his reply Dr. Weizsäcker expressed happiness over the cease-fire in the Gulf. He said that even nations like India which were indirectly affected by the conflict should be helped out and promised that the matter would receive attention at the next Indo-German bilateral assistance negotiations. The German President wanted India to seize the opportunities available in the European market and in the reconstruction of the former East Germany. He asserted that North–South relations should receive high priority in the post-détente phase and problems like over-population, hunger and ecological issues should get due focus.

The next morning our two families spent a pleasant hour going round the Moghul Gardens. Madame Weizsäcker showed keen interest in the cactuses displayed in the Garden. I told her that I had started an exclusive cactus garden where rare cactus flowers could be seen occasionally. We walked down the long garden which houses more than one hundred varieties of roses and later went into the sunken garden where the flowers formed a riot of colours.

Weizsäcker and I drifted into some philosophical reflections. I said th at happiness does not necessarily come from affluence. It comes from contentment with whatever one possesses. Though a starving man could not be happy, the affluent was not necessarily happy either. This was the basic philosophy of India and explained its spiritual

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

greatness.

We talked about the political instability caused by the multi-party system. Dr. Weizsäcker said that in Germany whenever there was no majority for a single party, which he said was the rule and not the exception, coalitions were formed and they worked satisfactorily. He said the existing government was a coalition of Christian Democrats (CDU) and Free Democrats (FDP) and they were carrying on the administration quite effectively. Mutual accommodation was the basis of their success with coalitions. For instance, when the Gulf war started the CDU wanted men and money to be furnished to the U.N. Force, while the Left FDP party did not want to provide either. The issue was settled by providing only money and not troops, thus satisfying both points of view. I said I wished such an atmosphere prevailed in India.

Dr. Weizsäcker, after the pleasant tour of the gardens and the talks, told me that of all his state visits to many countries, the morning in the Moghul Garden was the most enjoyable. The protocol officer reminded the German President that he was already behind time for the next appointment and we parted.

In his address on February 10 to the joint session of the Bihar legislature, Governor Yunus Saleem criticised the Central government for imposition of President's Rule in Tamil Nadu. The speech, after setting out the fact of dismissal of the Tamil Nadu government, continued: "This action hits at the democratic principles and also attacks constitutional autonomy of the States. Therefore our government expresses annoyance over the action." The Home Ministry considered that the Governor had committed a constitutional impropriety in reading the part of the address criticising the imposition of President's Rule. The Union government felt that the Governor was not bound to read everything

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

furnished by the State government and that the Governor should have declined to read that part of the speech, as Dharam Vira, Governor of West Bengal had done during his address to the joint session of the West Bengal legislature in 1969. It was reported that the Union Home Secretary had sought the resignation of Governor Saleem but he had refused to oblige. Thereupon, the Prime Minister advised the President to remove Yunus Saleem and to appoint B. Satyanarayana Reddi, Governor of Uttar Pradesh, to hold additional charge as Governor of Bihar.

A little earlier, the Union government had ordered the transfer of Surjit Singh Barnala, Governor of Tamil Nadu, to Bihar as its Governor. But Barnala had declined to accept the transfer and sent in his resignation to the Union Government. The Union Government had recommended acceptance of the resignation and appointment of the former Governor of Assam, Bhishma Narain Singh as Governor of Tamil Nadu. I approved all these proposals around February 14.

Though Governors had earlier been removed or transferred many times by every government, Congress or Janata Dal, there was criticism of the removal of Yunus Saleem and transfer of Barnala to Bihar. Unfortunately, the position of Governors has not been defined in the Constitution and since Britain has a unitary form of government, there are no precedents to draw from them. It is time that some regulations were framed regarding Governors' appointment, tenure, and responsibilities towards the Centre.

In one of the telegrams from our ambassador in Norway, it was suggested that the President or at least the Vice-President should represent India at the funeral of King Olof as a gesture of goodwill. I asked the Secretary to check whether there had been reciprocity in the matter between Norway and India and whether Norwegian royalty had represented that country when the Indian heads of State, Dr.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Zakir Hussain and Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed died in office. The External Affairs Ministry found that there was no such representation. They advised the Prime Minister that the President had drawn attention to the question of reciprocity in such matters and that it was enough if the ambassador represented India at the funeral of King Olof. Hence it was decided that the President, Vice-President or the Prime Minister need not attend the funeral.

When Deputy Prime Minister Devi Lal came to know about it, he expressed his willingness to go to Oslo and the Prime Minister agreed. Devi Lal insisted on a special chartered plane for the visit. The Prime Minister could not refuse though he had, only the other day, called for austerity in the use of fuel. Devi Lal and his party travelled 17 hours for a stay of 4 1/2 hours in Oslo for a ceremony that did not call for the presence of any one other than the ambassador. This is how we practise austerity.

Within barely ten weeks of Chandra Shekhar assuming the office of Prime Minister, there were reports that differences had cropped up between him and Rajiv Gandhi and that there were moves to dislodge the Prime Minister. I was worried that another crisis might follow closely on the heels of the last one and plunge the country into turmoil.

In February, Rajiv Gandhi met me and talked about his plan for elections in Tamil Nadu and his options for electoral alliance with other parties. He was vague and tentative and did not formulate any definite proposal. Thereafter, he expressed disappointment with Chandra Shekhar on a number of matters. Around the last week of January it became known to the public that the United States Air Force was afforded refuelling facilities for its transport planes in certain civilian airports. This was assailed by parties as a betrayal of India's policy of non-alignment and aiding the United States in the Gulf war. Rajiv Gandhi was critical of Chandra Shekhar on

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

this score and looked upon it as a serious lapse by the government. He was annoyed with Chandra Shekhar for not dropping the disqualified members from the Cabinet. He also said that he was disappointed with the government's policy on Punjab and Kashmir. But he did not give any indication of withdrawing support to the government or forming an alternative government.

In the evening H.K.L. Bhagat, former Union Minister and Delhi Pradesh Congress leader called on me and gave a more detailed picture of the thinking within the Congress Party. He said that the party was critical of Chandra Shekhar's Gulf policy, giving refuelling facilities for American aircraft and his handling of the economic situation. He indicated that groups led by Devi Lal and Arun Nehru were prepared to support Rajiv Gandhi to form a government. I was shocked beyond words. I wondered what had happened to the written guarantee of "unconditional support" and oral promise of backing for at least one year to the Chandra Shekhar government. I cautioned Bhagat that with all the experience of shifting loyalties, the Congress would be venturing to cross a river on a mud horse if it relied on the alleged support of splinter groups and that the Congress should stick it out with Chandra Shekhar for some more time. I also told him that there were a number of imponderables like the Prime Minister seeking dissolution of the House and frustrating the chances of another government being formed and that he should ponder deeply over all these aspects before making any move to disturb the government. I pointed out another compulsion for sticking together, namely the need to pass a budget or a vote on account before the end of March failing which, even salary disbursements could not be made on April 1.

I wanted Bhagat to convey all these to Rajiv Gandhi but I do not know how much he communicated to his leader.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Meanwhile, rumours were afloat that Devi Lal, Arun Nehru and Arif Mohammed Khan had offered support to Rajiv Gandhi's leadership. On February 5, Rangarajan Kumarmangalam, one of the whips of the Congress Party came and spoke of the difficulties of coordinating the business of Parliament with the Chandra Shekhar government. He also mentioned that Rajiv Gandhi was disenchanted with the experiment of supporting a minority government from outside but was not encouraging any move to dislodge the Chandra Shekhar ministry.

Soon after, Rajiv Gandhi visited me and gave a note detailing the problems he was having with the Chandra Shekhar ministry. He indicated that there was a move for parties and persons, with a broad national approach, to coming together to provide a stable government. He said that a senior CPI(M) leader was trying to find a consensus among like-minded persons for forming an alternative government. I noticed a definite shift in Rajiv Gandhi's thinking. He was not only prepared to head the government but was eager to do so. Newspapers were full of stories that the ministry might be replaced even before February 21, the day Parliament was scheduled to meet for the President's address.

On February 8, V.C. Shukla, one of the ministers disqualified by the Speaker, spoke to me about the initiative of the Non-Aligned Movement for peace in the Gulf. He added that in order to save the government he was ready to resign from the Cabinet if Rajiv Gandhi wanted it. Shukla said he was confident of being re-elected. He discounted the stories about the threat to the Chandra Shekhar government and denied that Devi Lal had sufficient strength to break the party.

In view of the growing speculation creating a psychosis of instability in the country, I decided to have a frank talk with the Prime Minister and Rajiv Gandhi separately. Rajiv

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Gandhi went on to express dissatisfaction with Chandra Shekhar's Gulf policy, the Punjab initatives and the deepening economic crisis. He was willing to take over the government but was not sure of stable support. He was a real Hamlet debating "to be or not to be" a Prime Minister.

I was desperate to save the ministry for at least another six months. I wanted the financial business authorising expenditure beyond April 1 to be adopted before a crisis enveloped the country. It appeared to me that no one understood the gravity of a situation where the administration could come to a standstill without adequate financial provisions being made. Hence, I reminded Rajiv Gandhi of the unconditional support he had promised to the ministry and the loss of credibility he would suffer by acting contrary to his words. He hastened to say that he was not contemplating the fall of the ministry and that he would continue to support it.

The next day newspapers reported that there was a thaw in the relationship between Chandra Shekhar and Rajiv Gandhi. But this was short-lived for Rajiv Gandhi again called on me on February 11 and expressed apprehension that the Budget the Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha was preparing might contain a massive dose of taxation which, if supported by the Congress (I), would lead to the party losing popularity at the time of the next elections. He repeated his old complaints regarding the refuelling of American aircraft and the fading image of India in the international world. I wanted Rajiv Gandhi to arrive at an acceptable solution. Perhaps Rajiv Gandhi expected me to endorse his criticism of the Chandra Shekhar government but noticing my lack of response, he left saying that he would call again later.

On February 13, Rajiv Gandhi again called on me with Pranab Mukherjee, my successor as Finance Minister in 1982. Pranab Mukherjee told me that he had a discussion with

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Yashwant Sinha and that he felt a harsh budget would be inappropriate at that time. He was also worried that inflation would be sparked off and bring unpopularity to the Congress if it supported those measures. Since Yashwant Sinha had earlier discussed the economic situation with me, I told Pranab Mukherji of some of the compulsions on the Finance Minister. As an old colleague of mine I explained to him that the current inflation was not due to cost-push or demand-pull but largely due to excessive liquidity and that budgetary action was unavoidable to control inflation. The whole discussion was in the nature of an academic exercise rather than consultation on programmes to be adopted. I again cautioned Rajiv Gandhi against breaking the government and creating instability in the country. Rajiv Gandhi then said that the government would not fall on account of the Congress (I) but if Chandra Shekhar was not able to manage his party, then he alone would be responsible for the consequences.

On February 19, the Prime Minister met me at 8 p.m. He said that the United States might itself cease refuelling its aircraft in India, that he was forwarding the resignation of the disqualified ministers for my acceptance and that he was presenting a vote on account to Parliament and not a regular budget. He added that matters had been discussed and settled between his party and the Congress (I). He hoped to conclude the Parliament session by the end of March.

The President's address to both Houses of Parliament was scheduled for February 21, with the usual ceremonials. Imposition of President's rule in Tamil Nadu was criticised by all the opposition parties and most of the newspapers. The opposition parties decided to boycott the joint session as a protest against the President's action. I did not pay much attention to the criticism as I was positive in my mind that the President could not become a second centre of power in the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

country. I wanted to establish a firm convention that the President should not do anything more than what the Crown in England could do. The BJP, however, clarified that it was abstaining from attendance because of the decision of the Cabinet to present only a vote on account and not a regular budget.

I had always held the view that the address by the President and Governors at the commencement of the first session of the legislature every year was a British anachronism. First, the address was prepared by the government and contained only its views and the President and the Governors were mere mouthpieces. While this is a fact, very often the President or Governors were criticised on the contents of the address, creating a wrong public impression about these dignitaries. Further, disorderly behaviour during these addresses marred the dignity of the high offices. The addresses were sometimes torn or snatched from the hands of Governors creating ugly scenes. During Rajiv Gandhi's time, I had written to him to amend the Constitution deleting this meaningless formality. This time also I wrote to Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar on similar lines.

A few days before Republic Day, the Prime Minister consulted me on conferring the nation's highest honour Bharat Ratna on Morarji Desai, former Prime Minister, then over 96 years old. Considering his immense contribution to the freedom struggle and service to the nation, I readily agreed to the suggestion. Since Morarji Desai was not in a condition to travel, I suggested that he could nominate someone to receive the decoration on March 23, the day fixed for the award ceremony.

Only the award of Bharat Ratna is conferred *in absentia*. When Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan was in hospital, the award was presented to his son Wali Khan. All other Padma awards are sent to the absentees by the Home Ministry. When

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Gulzari Lal Nanda, former Home Minister and twice acting Prime Minister, who had been awarded the Padma Vibhushan, enquired whether he could nominate a person to receive the award on his behalf because of his old age, it was conveyed to him that it was not the convention to do so.

When India gave Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan the Bharat Ratna, the Pakistan government matched it by giving its highest award, Nishan Pakistan, to Morarji Desai. However, when Benazir Bhutto came to power, she cancelled the award saying that Morarji Desai as Prime Minister had declined to appeal even on humanitarian grounds for clemency to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Nawaz Sharief, the next Prime Minister, revived it and announced that the award would be presented to Morarji Desai at his residence in formal ceremony. When I saw these reports in the Press I wrote to Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar asking whether a foreign government could conduct such a ceremony on Indian soil and whether permission had been taken for it. I added that so far as our national award was concerned, I was for observing the convention of presentation only in the Durbar Hall of Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Chandra Shekhar later told me that he had a talk with Kanti Desai, son of Morarji Desai, and Kanti Desai asked why the President should not come to Desai's house and make a ceremonial presentation, when Pakistan was prepared to do so. I told the Prime Minister that a state award function could not be performed anywhere, much less in private residences, and I would not denigrate the solemnity of the occasion. Chandra Shekhar said he was told that President Rajendra Prasad had presented the Bharat Ratna to Purushottam Das Tandon in Uttar Pradesh. I verified and found that Rajendra Prasad had handed over the insignia of the award to Tandon during a visit to U.P. That was different from holding a ceremony in Morarji Desai's house. I was firm that the dignity

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

and conventions of the office of the President should be maintained at all costs.

Even after the resignation of five disqualified ministers and resolution of the differences over presentation of a regular budget, the conflict between the Congress (I) and Chandra Shekhar persisted. Suddenly a major crisis developed. Two policemen of Haryana were caught maintaining a "surveillance" on Rajiv Gandhi. They were keeping track of all visitors to Rajiv Gandhi's residence and of his movements. Rajiv Gandhi was infuriated by this and thought it must have been done with the connivance of Chandra Shekhar. He also felt that his security was in jeopardy as his movements were communicated to others. Rajiv Gandhi communicated to me through his emissary the following points:

a) The Haryana Government should resign, owning constitutional responsibility for surveillance on him;
b) The Home Minister of the Haryana government should resign or be dismissed; and
c) The Lt. Governor of Delhi should be dismissed for the insult.

I was surprised at the violent reaction to what appeared to me to be a small matter which could have even been a mistake. It was a tall order for any Prime Minister to dismiss any one in the Haryana government for this. No Prime Minister could dismiss a government unless the administration could not be carried on in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution.

When the Lok Sabha met on March 5, the Congress members raised an uproar over the surveillance issue. Chandra Shekhar condemned the surveillance on political leaders and offered to institute a parliamentary enquiry into the matter and take stern action against those responsible.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

This did not satisfy the Congress members who staged a walkout saying they would keep away till adequate action was taken against those responsible for the episode. The Lok Sabha had to be adjourned for want of quorum twice and finally till the afternoon.

The Opposition was quick to seize the opportunity to embarrass the government and moved for closure of the debate on the motion of thanks that was going on. Deputy Speaker Shivraj Patil who is one of the most competent parliamentarians, ruled that the Business Advisory Committee had allotted five hours for the debate and that he could not accept the motion for closure. As the Opposition did not put up any speakers and the Congress was absent, the debate was collapsing.

At 9.45 a.m. on March 6, Chandra Shekhar called on me and reported all that had happened in the Lok Sabha. He said that if the Congress continued its boycott, he would request the Speaker to adjourn the House to enable him to meet the President and tender the resignation of the Council of Ministers. He said he did not want his government to be defeated in the House. Chandra Shekhar was calm and unruffled and spoke with precision on the exaggerated reaction of Rajiv Gandhi and the Congress to an issue in which he as Prime Minister was not at all involved.

I was very unhappy at the prospect of another crisis within three months of the previous one. I thought the surveillance episode was not of such great national importance as to cause the fall of a government. At any rate Chandra Shekhar was not to be blamed for the incident.

So, immediately after Chandra Shekhar left, I called P.V. Narasimha Rao, the seniormost party leader after Rajiv Gandhi and conveyed to him the gravity of the situation and the need to let the government continue for at least a few months more. I also reminded him of Rajiv Gandhi's

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

unconditional support to Chandra Shekhar and the possible loss of credibility if he resiled from it.

A little later around 12.15 p.m. Rajiv Gandhi called on me. I thought that Narasimha Rao had conveyed my feelings and that he was coming to give me his response. As soon as he came, I started referring to the brewing crisis and decision of Chandra Shekhar to tender the resignation of his Cabinet. To my surprise Rajiv Gandhi cut in and said, "Before that I want to brief you about the surveillance at my residence and its implications." He was seething with anger and bitterness. I allowed him to have his say. He said that Om Prakash Chautala, Haryana Chief Minister, who was a great friend of Chandra Shekhar, was collecting information about persons visiting his house and his own movements which could get into the hands of the extremists. He asserted that it was an insult to a political leader. After he finished I told him that Chandra Shekhar was going to tender his resignation in a few minutes if the Congress continued its boycott of the Lok Sabha but that did not have any visible impact on him.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

34

In the Lok Sabha, the list of speakers having been exhausted, Chandra Shekhar started replying to the debate on the motion of thanks. His reply was half-hearted and feeble even while defending the imposition of President's Rule in Assam and Tamil Nadu and he strayed to have a dig or two at the Congress. Finally he requested the Speaker to adjourn the House to enable him to meet the President and tender the resignation of his government.

At 2.45 p.m. Chandra Shekhar presented his letter of resignation and advised dissolution of the Lok Sabha as he wanted to seek a fresh mandate from the people. I found the situation a little more complicated than on the earlier occasions as there were a number of financial measures to be adopted before the House could be dissolved. There would be financial chaos if no provision was made for the coming year as no expenditure could be incurred after April 1, 1991. The railway budget, supplementary grants for fiscal year 1990-91 and sanctions for excess expenditure, as well as budgets for the States under President's Rule had to be adopted. Besides, constitutional action for postponing elections in Punjab was an immediate necessity.

I accepted Chandra Shekhar's resignation and requested his Council of Ministers to continue in office till another ministry was formed. As regards the advice for dissolution,

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

I said I would take a decision separately within 24 hours, and hoped that the financial business would be completed by the next day, March 7, as it was only a formality.

I did not accept the resignation without feeling sorry for Chandra Shekhar. During his few months in office, he had handled Parliament competently and was responsive to suggestions from the Opposition. He was under constant strain from the pressures of the Congress Party, which I am afraid, assumed that it was the real government and Chandra Shekhar only a proxy. The office-hungry coterie of the Congress Party used to misguide Rajiv Gandhi that Chandra Shekhar's attempts at building up a good image could prove deleterious to his image. Looking back after two years, I realise my naiveness in accepting the Congress assurance of "unconditional support" to Chandra Shekhar. I had expected the support to last a year at least. I realised that unequal combinations are always disadvantageous to the weaker side.

At 4.30 p.m. the leader of the Opposition, L.K. Advani and other opposition group leaders numbering about twenty called on me and demanded immediate dissolution of the House, continuation of the Chandra Shekhar government as a caretaker one and keeping Rajiv Gandhi out of reckoning. Advani promised cooperation to avoid "a constitutional crisis". I told them that the Speaker was calling on me later that evening and I would request him to call all the party leaders and finalise modalities for adoption of the financial business.

I, however, told them that "I was a 'copybook' President and would act strictly according to the rules." The leaders gave me the impression that they would adopt all fiscal and other measures unanimously the next day.

Speaker Rabi Ray came at 5.30 p.m. Actually the meeting was fixed for discussing the motion for impeachment of Jus-

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

tice Ramaswami. But in the face of ministerial crisis, the issue receded to the background. I conveyed to the Speaker the offer of all Opposition parties to cooperate in passing the financial and other business and suggested to him to call a meeting of all party leaders to work out the modalities.

As soon as the ministry resigned, I called constitutional experts to advise me on the following issues:

1) Whether the advice of the Chandra Shekhar government for dissolution of the Lok Sabha was binding on the President;
2) Whether the Prime Minister, after acceptance of his resignation but continuing in office, was competent to pilot any legislation in the House; and
3) What could the President do to ensure financial provision for carrying on the administration in the event of Parliament not passing the financial business?

On the question of piloting a bill in Parliament after resignation by the Prime Minister, there was a British precedent when in a somewhat similar situation, financial business was adopted in the House of Commons. I sent a letter to the Speaker as well as to the Prime Minister that when the President asked the Prime Minister to continue in office, he had the power to function as such, in legislative as well as administrative matters. As regards the other two items there was divergence of opinion between the eminent lawyer Nariman and the constitutional expert Dr. Chitale whom I met the same evening. Both of them promised to give me their considered views in writing the next day.

It was now 9.30 p.m. My mind was buzzing with confusion and I thought I would lose my sleep. I went and played a game of billiards trying to drown my miseries by concentrating on the billiard balls.

I woke the next morning with a pleasant feeling that all financial and other measures would be passed unanimously

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

and I could decide on the dissolution of the Lok Sabha immediately thereafter. I was fed up with all these experiments of running minority governments and sick of the promises of support from outside to them. In any event, the Mandal agitation had abated and the Mandir frenzy had cooled a bit. The compulsion to defer elections immediately in the wake of the *kar seva* in Ayodhya on October 30, 1990 and self-immolations on Mandal reservations had now ceased. But strange are the ways of the world and stranger still that of politicians. When the Opposition parties met the Speaker at 9.30. a.m., Advani, who the previous evening had promised total cooperation in passing financial and other bills and prevent a constitutional crisis, was reported to have said that they would agree to pass the financial business only on condition that the President agreed to dissolve the House and have Chandra Shekhar continue as caretaker Prime Minister. The Speaker was requested to convey this to the President. The meeting of the House was adjourned to the afternoon.

The Speaker came at 10.15 a.m. and when I was expecting the pleasant news about the agreement of the parties to pass the measures, he gave me a shock by conveying the conditions stipulated by Opposition leaders. I kept my cool. I was surprised that Advani, one of our best parliamentarians who observed the highest decorum in the House when I was Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, could ever dream of stipulating conditions to the President. Moreover, how was President benefited or affected by the passing or not passing of necessary legislation for carrying on the government? I told the Speaker that only because the Leader of the Opposition had agreed the previous day to complete the legislative business, had I passed on the task to him and that the stipulation of conditions to the President was not "proper." I wanted this to be conveyed to the leaders quite

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

firmly. That the Opposition leaders wanted an assurance, undertaking or an advance decision, was clear from newspaper reports of the event.

The Speaker came back later in the day and said the Opposition leaders had clarified that they did not stipulate any conditions but only wanted to convey their strong feelings about dissolution. He added that they had all agreed to adopt all measures on Monday, March 11.

My consultations with legal experts and party leaders continued throughout the day. Dr. Singhvi, jurist and High Commissioner-designate to the United Kingdom gave his views on the issues raised. He also consulted me whether he should tender his resignation in view of the change in government. I advised him to await a further communication from the government and avoid acting on his own. S. Balakrishnan, Constitutional Adviser in the Home Ministry, Parasaran, former Attorney-General, K.K. Venugopal, President of the Supreme Court Bar Association, F.S. Nariman, eminent lawyer and G. Ramaswami, Attorney-General met me in sequence. To the adage which says no two doctors or clocks agree I would add, no two lawyers. Most of the lawyers I met were of the opinion that the President was not bound by the advice of the Prime Minister on dissolution of the Lok Sabha. They quoted *Halsbury's Laws of England* and other textbooks. I pointed out to them that in Britain the Crown had not rejected the advice for dissolution of the House of Commons from the Prime Minister either in office or defeated in the House, during the last one hundred years, though in 1850, the Crown had exercised its discretion. On the question whether in the event of Parliament not adopting fiscal measures for the next financial year, an ordinance could be issued, opinion was sharply divided. Some felt that no ordinance could be issued in respect of appropriation and budgetary procedures, while others argued that the power of

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

issuing ordinances was co-extensive with the power of legislation and there was no bar against an ordinance on a vote on account.

On March 8, Yashwant Sinha, Finance Minister, came for breakfast. He was sore that he had been deprived of the chance of presenting a regular budget. He had even offered to resign on that score. He was of the view that an ordinance could be issued in the event of Parliament not passing financial provisions for the year ahead.

At 10.15 Advani and Vajpayee of the BJP called on me and explained that they had not imposed any condition on the President for passing the fiscal measures but only wanted the Speaker to convey their strong feelings for dissolution of the House and continuation of Chandra Shekhar as a caretaker Prime Minister. Being always courteous, I said that I accepted their clarification and would forget it. They also said that all parties had agreed to pass the financial and other measures without debate on March 11. V.C. Shukla, the disqualified minister who had resigned, wanted to know if he could be inducted into the Cabinet as after his resignation he had become an ordinary citizen. I told him that according to norms, a caretaker government could not be expanded and that I could not countenance such a move.

The Muslim League leaders Ibrahim Sulaiman Sait, Banatwala and Abdul Samad came next. They argued that even if financial measures were not passed by Parliament, the government could draw from the Consolidated Fund of India for defraying expenditure after March 31. I explained to them that it was precisely because no expenditure could be incurred without parliamentary sanction that the institution of a vote on account was provided for in the Constitution and if their view was correct the time-honoured and consistent practice of passing a vote on account would become redundant. There was also the danger of a ministry, unable to get

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

a vote on account passed, resorting to withdrawal from the Consolidated Fund of India.

Subhash Kashyap, former Secretary-General of the Lok Sabha and an erudite scholar, argued cogently why an ordinance could not be issued in budgetary processes. I asked him what would happen to the country if Parliament did not pass a vote on account for the next fiscal year, knowing what had happened to countries which were unable to pay salaries to defence service personnel on the due date.

A number of members of Parliament met me individually and in twos and threes. They pleaded with me not to dissolve the Lok Sabha. I told them that it was their party leaders who were annoyed and angry with me for not dissolving the House immediately and that these members should talk to their leaders rather than to me. They said they were afraid of approaching their leaders as they might be denied the party ticket for the next election!

The failure of the Opposition leaders to pass the financial business on March 7 offered both time and opportunity for manoeuvres to instal another hotchpotch government. Political leaders and the Press indulged in innuendoes and criticism that the President was trying to instal another government with Rajiv Gandhi at the head! Truth has boundaries but fancies have none. As a matter of fact, no one till March 8 had ever talked to me about installing another government.

On March 9, Biju Patnaik, a senior leader of the Janata Dal and Chief Minister of Orissa, came for breakfast. We have known each other for decades and I have a high opinion of him as a dynamic administrator and forthright person. He expressed the view that a general election at this time would plunge the country into turmoil and enquired if there were any chances of constituting a national government. I said that there was no chance of the political parties in the ninth Lok

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Sabha coming together for any constructive work though they all easily combined to stall any work. I added that if political parties came up with a proposal for a coalition government, I would lend a helping hand but would not take any initiative. I also told him that I was disenchanted with the device of "support from outside" and would not contemplate accepting anything less than a genuine coalition government. Biju Patnaik said he would try his hand at bringing about a coalition and would call back. He never did.

A few more members of Parliament supporting Devi Lal came and pleaded that the rank and file of all parties were against dissolution of the Lok Sabha. I told them also that they had to convince their leaders and not me. It was strange they should want the President to fight their cause.

Rajiv Gandhi met me a little later. He said there were moves to bring about an understanding between Chandra Shekhar and himself. He was pestered by his own party members who were upset at being deprived of their seats in Parliament within fifteen months. I frankly told Rajiv Gandhi that the old arrangement of support from outside was unacceptable to me and that unless there was a prospect of coalition or merger, it was useless to pursue these efforts. Obviously he was displeased with my response and talked vaguely about further splits in the Janata Dal and the Janata Dal (S), and then left. The newspapers were abusive about my delay in ordering dissolution. They did not stop to think how the financial provision for the next fiscal year could be made if the Lok Sabha was dissolved.

There was a stream of callers on March 10. Vasant Sathe, former Union Minister and a non-conformist thinker and author, suggested that I should appoint a group of eminent persons as Council of Ministers to solve the crisis. I asked him how they could get the budget passed in the Lok Sabha or command the confidence of the House without which they

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

could not function. A similar suggestion was made by Unnikrishnan, the sole Congress (S) member of Parliament. He wanted me to take the initiative to constitute a national government. When I pointed out that it was for the parties to take the initiative and that I could only make suggestions, he said I was not only the President but also a respected national leader. To my shock, I found in the next morning's papers Unnikrishnan vociferously demanding dissolution of the Lok Sabha. That is politics in India!

Prem Bhatia is an exception to the ordinary run of journalists. An incisive mind with vast knowledge and experience in diplomacy and political affairs, he always calls a spade a spade, irrespective of current euphoria or condemnation from his tribe. I have always had a high regard for his views on public affairs. He spent half an hour with me. He said that he was not conversant with law but the idea of the budget or any part of it being enacted through an ordinance was repugnant to him. In his view, a nation should not be plunged into a general election without exploring the chances of forming a viable alternative government. However, in the current context, he felt the chances of a stable alternative government were remote. He regaled me with a number of anecdotes.

Unable to get an alternative, I pondered over the various possibilities. Why not dissolve the Lok Sabha and enact a vote on account through an ordinance and create a precedent in the constitutional history of India, I thought. Then I brushed aside the unworthy thought and said to myself that I should not be guilty of creating a dangerous precedent. I was determined not to issue an ordinance in respect of financial and budgetary matters. I thought if it came to the worst I would request both Chandra Shekhar and Rajiv Gandhi to cooperate to pass a vote on account in the interest of the nation and the sanctity of parliamentary approval for

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

budgetary and financial matters.

The dark and menacing cloud over the political horizon slowly lifted on March 11 with the Lok Sabha adopting all financial business and the Punjab Constitution Amendment Bill, in just two hours without any debate. When these came before the Rajya Sabha on March 12, it too passed all the legislation. However, the Rajya Sabha could not adopt the statutory resolution extending President's rule in Punjab and had to meet the next day March 13.

Even after the financial bills had been passed in the Lok Sabha, some leaders approached me to explore the possibility of formation of a coalition government. By that time I had decided to order general election.

T.N. Kaul, former ambassador to the Soviet Union and K.R. Narayanan, M.P., came for a chat. They commiserated with me on the political chaos facing the country. I told them that I had taken it in my stride and the end of suspense was near. I did not tell them of my plan to dissolve the Lok Sabha.

The Rajya Sabha passed all measures including the statutory resolution on Punjab by 12 noon on March 13. It took me two hours to draft my communique explaining the decision to dissolve the Lok Sabha forthwith.

The communique read as follows:

> On March 6, 1991, the Prime Minister Mr. Chandra Shekhar and his Council of Ministers tendered their resignations and wanted to seek a fresh mandate from the people. The President accepted the resignations and requested the Council of Ministers to continue in office till alternative arrangements were made.
>
> Since financial provisions to defray expenditure after March 31, 1991, had to be made, the President stated that orders on the request for fresh polls would be made separately.
>
> A number of representations were made to the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

President in favour of and against the dissolution of the Lok Sabha. Questions whether the President could resort to issue of an ordinance in case Parliament failed to pass budgetary measures to cover expenditure during 1991-92 also cropped up.

The President consulted eminent lawyers and jurists and also party leaders and reached the conclusion that it would be safer to have the financial provisions passed by Parliament.

As necessary budgetary and other legislative measures have since been passed by both Houses of Parliament and as the Union Council of Ministers headed by Mr Chandra Shekhar has already resigned and recommended a fresh poll and no political party has staked a claim to form an alternative government, the President dissolves the Lok Sabha with immediate effect. A Presidential Order under sub-clause (B) of Clause 2 of Article 85 of the Constitution dissolving the Lok Sabha has been issued.

The President has also directed the constitution of the new Lok Sabha on or before the 5th of June, 1991. Official notification in this regard will be published in due course.

The President wishes to thank all jurists, political leaders and eminent men who have helped him with their advice, counsel and suggestions.

It would be seen from the communique that I did not base the dissolution of the Lok Sabha solely on recommendation of the outgoing Prime Minister but on the other factor also, namely that no political party had come forward to form a government. I also laid down a healthy convention that budgetary and financial provisions should be handled by Parliament and not through an ordinance. I introduced the innovation of fixing a date for the constitution of the new Lok

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Sabha which is sustained by the British practice.

It may be recalled that though the Lok Sabha was dissolved in August 1979, the caretaker Prime Minister Charan Singh did not call elections till December 1979. I did not want such prolonged uncertainty. Besides, the authorisation for four months through the vote on account would expire by the end of July 1991 and a new Lok Sabha had to meet and pass the budget before the date of expiry of the authorisation. I, however, consulted Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar before fixing the date for constitution of the new House.

The same evening, a number of members of Parliament met me. The Lok Sabha members were angry with me while the Rajya Sabha members complimented me on the dissolution of the Lok Sabha. Some said the delay in dissolution had set aflame speculation that Rajiv Gandhi was trying to take office through the back door and the President was conniving at it. I told them that the Opposition groups were entirely responsible for the trauma they created for themselves. By not passing the financial and other business on March 7 as they had agreed with me and by stipulating conditions for the President for passing the bills, they had allowed time and opportunity for all wheeler-dealers to wallow in the mud of political uncertainty. Since there were some members of Opposition groups in the gathering I hoped that they would carry the message to their leaders.

On January 9, 1991, a file came to me seeking the President's recommendation for introduction of a bill for enhancing the pay and allowances and perquisites of members and former members of Parliament. Among the provisions in the bill, I found two unconscionable items namely, the provision of pension at the rate of Rs. 300 a month for life to former members who had completed one year of membership of Parliament, and limited free travel facilities

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

for former members. I returned the file with the endorsement that I wanted to speak to the Prime Minister.

On January 10, when I went to Parliament House to unveil a portrait of Assamese leader Gopinath Bardoloi, the Prime Minister said he wanted to speak to me urgently. I asked him to accompany me to Rashtrapati Bhavan after the function. When at the meeting the Prime Minister mentioned the emoluments of Parliament members, I replied that it was unconscionable to pay a pension of Rs. 300 a month for life to a member who had completed only a year in Parliament. I also told the Prime Minister that a member of Parliament, on ceasing to be one, was a citizen like any other and is not called upon to discharge any responsibilities to the community or the state. There was therefore no justification for free travel facility for his private purposes. I pointed out that with all the free travel concessions allowed for various categories, the fare paying passenger had to travel only on the footboards. The Prime Minister agreed with me but pleaded that the pressure on him was immense. He asked me if I could talk to Rajiv Gandhi about it. I said I would do so as I felt that the proposals were unreasonable. Later in the day when I spoke to Rajiv Gandhi about the bill he totally agreed with my view and said that the need of the hour was for people to forgo some privileges rather than seek additional ones. The bill did not come up during the session.

However, on the last day of the Lok Sabha on March 12, 1991, Satya Prakash Malaviya, Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, introduced a bill for enhancement of pay, pension and perquisites of members and former members of Parliament without the provisions objected to by me. It was done in unseemly haste, waiving all rules of procedure. The government moved a number of amendments and it was adopted. At this stage a Janata Dal member, Venkatesh Kabde, moved an amendment to provide a proportionate

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

amount to every member "who had served for a minimum period of one year". The government promptly supported the amendment though it involved sizeable additional expenditure every year. The undue haste and the denial of a division for purposes of record of those voting for or against the bill was unprecedented in the annals of Parliament.

When the bill, as passed by the Lok Sabha, was presented to me under Article 117(I) for recommendation of the President for moving it in the Rajya Sabha, I minuted in the file that the amendment regarding criteria for eligibility for pension was moved without the recommendation of the President and since March 13 was the last day of the Rajya Sabha session, I accorded recommendation for its consideration subject to scrutiny of the validity of the amendment at the time of giving assent. The bill was passed by the Rajya Sabha and duly sent to me for assent. I examined the validity of the amendment moved by Kabde and found that it required the recommendation of the President before introduction and was therefore clearly flawed. I told Satya Prakash Malaviya that I did not propose to give assent to the bill.

The Minister sought the help of the Attorney-General to discuss the matter with me. Attorney-General Ramaswamy did not question my view that Kabde's amendment needed the President's recommendation before introduction but argued that if the President gave his assent to the bill, the flaw in procedure could be rectified under Article 122. I said I was not prepared to overlook an important provision of the Constitution relating to financial procedures and reserved my decision. I understood that nearly half the members of the Lok Sabha were new members with just 15 months of service and they were very angry with me. I also incurred the wrath of some Constituent Assembly members who had less than five years of service in Parliament.

On March 22, Om Prakash Chautala, former Chief

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Minister of Haryana, who had to resign following abuses in the Meham by-election, sprang a surprise. He made his nominee Hukum Singh resign, got himself elected leader of the legislature party and staked his claim for appointment as Chief Minister of Haryana. Governor Dhanik Lal Mandal, who was in Delhi, met me and said that he was called upon to swear in Chautala as Chief Minister and sought my advice. I asked him to return to Chandigarh and study the facts and if warranted, administer the oath of office to Chautala. The same evening Chautala was sworn in as Chief Minister. However, three ministers of the Haryana government resigned even before the swearing-in ceremony, creating doubts about Chautala's majority in the legislature. All political parties, the Congress, the Janata Dal, the BJP and the CPI(M) reacted violently to the reinduction of Chautala as Chief Minister and recalled the cloud under which he had to resign earlier.

Within five days of assuming office, Chautala appeared to have lost his majority in the Assembly. So he cleverly advised the Governor on March 27 to dissolve the Assembly so that he might continue in office as head of a caretaker administration. When I saw these messages on the tele-printer, I rang up Chandra Shekhar and told him that Chautala's recommendation for dissolution lacked validity as he had not proved his majority in the House and if the Assembly was dissolved, it would be more appropriate to have President's Rule and not a caretaker government of one who had not established his credentials.

At 4 p.m. Dhanik Lal Mandal met me and conveyed the recommendation for dissolution made by Chautala and its implications. I told the Governor that my initial reaction was that as the Chief Minister had not established his majority in the Assembly, his recommendation was not binding on the Governor and that if Chautala proved his majority, the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Governor could exercise his judgement. I also asked the Governor to consult the Prime Minister.

Harkishan Singh Surjeet of the CPI(M), Jaipal Reddy of the Janata Dal and Balram Jakhar of the Congress(I) and their followers called on me and insisted on dismissal of the Chautala government. I pointed out to them that the President could not take a sheet of white paper and issue orders dismissing State ministries. A recommendation to that effect had to emanate from the Cabinet and the leaders had to convince the Prime Minister on the steps they wanted.

It is odd that these very leaders, who wanted Article 356 to be removed from the statute book, should come and plead for exercise of power under the same Article. Even newspapers editorially appealed to the President to dismiss Chautala's government, giving a wrong impression that the President could *suo moto* take action in such matters.

On his return to Chandigarh, Dhanik Lal Mandal called upon Chautala to prove his majority in the Assembly on or before April 3 on the ground that he had received reports that the strength on which he claimed to be sworn in as Chief Minister had suffered diminution. Chautala challenged the right of the Governor to ask the Chief Minister to prove his majority after the latter had recommended dissolution of the Assembly. It was obvious that Chautala was not sure of his majority in the House.

On April 2, Dhanik Lal Mandal sent me a detailed report explaining how he had accepted the claim of Chautala for the office of Chief Minister and how the subsequent resignation of three ministers and disqualification of three other members by the Speaker had reduced Chautala's strength in the Assembly. The Governor also stated that as the Chief Minister had declined to prove his strength in the House, he recommended imposition of President's rule under Article 356 of the Constitution. I forwarded the report to the Home

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Ministry for advice.

It was said that the Prime Minister wanted to act according to the advice of the Attorney-General and that the latter opined that unless there were strong grounds for differing from the Governor's report it should be accepted.

On April 5, Law Minister Subramaniam Swamy and Attorney-General Ramaswamy met me and conveyed the acceptance of the Governor's report and approval of imposition of President's Rule in Haryana. The clever lawyer that G. Ramaswamy is, he drew my attention to the statutory requirement under Article 356 (3) of the Constitution, of approval by both Houses of Parliament within two months of the issue of the proclamation and said it should be so timed that the two-month period expired after the last date for constitution of the new Lok Sabha. While agreeing with him I said even if the new Lok Sabha was not constituted before expiry of two months after the proclamation, a resolution could be adopted by the Rajya Sabha within two months and a resolution adopted by the new Lok Sabha within 30 days from its first sitting after reconstitution. I issued the proclamation imposing President's Rule in Haryana from April 6.

On March 31, T.N. Seshan, Chief Election Commissioner, met me and gave details of the arrangements made for peaceful conduct of polls in all parts of the country. He had taken a tough stand against electoral malpractices like booth capturing, violence, intimidation and disturbances on polling day and warned that in such cases the election would be countermanded. He said he was ready with the election arrangements in the troubled states of Punjab, Kashmir and Assam and was awaiting the decision of the government on holding elections in those states. He was worried that violence might erupt in Bihar owing to caste animosities and in Uttar Pradesh because of religious tensions.

When he asked me about my assessment of the feasibility

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

of fair elections in the three strife-torn states, I said that the Congress, the BJP and the Left parties were doubtful about an orderly poll in Punjab and Kashmir while the Janata Dal was in favour of having elections simultaneously all over India. I said that Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar was also in favour of having elections in Punjab and Assam but was not sure about elections in Kashmir. I told him that as Chief Election Commissioner he should work out all the details for poll in all three states simultaneously. Seshan raised one important point about deployment of special security staff in the three troubled states. He said that a large concentration of security forces would be needed in each of the three states and as sufficient forces could not be mustered at one time, poll in these states should be staggered allowing sufficient time for moving the security forces from one state to another.

I visited Jammu on April 6 to present the guidon to the 64 Cavalry Regiment and met a large number of local leaders. They expressed satisfaction over improvement in the situation and said that people were getting fed up with terrorists and that even the militants felt frustrated and were changing their attitude. On the other hand, the Congress (I), Dr. Farooq Abdullah, Saifuddin Soz, M.P., and Handoo were against holding elections in the strife-torn Kashmir. Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar, however, repeated that elections would be held in all the three states.

The Governors of Punjab and Assam met me on April 11 after their meeting with the Prime Minister. They vehemently argued in favour of holding election in their states not only for Parliament but for the Assemblies as well. They asserted that if elections were not held along with the rest of India, the people of those states would be alienated from the rest of the country. When asked whether the extremists would not liquidate candidates opposing them and terrorise and intimidate voters, the Governors astounded me by

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

saying that there would be no violence except in a few places, while assaults on innocents was a daily feature in those States. The Chief Election Commissioner told me at 8 p.m. on the same day (April 11) that the Prime Minister had advised him to hold elections in Punjab and Assam along with other States.

On April 12, Seshan met me. I told him to proceed to organise elections in Punjab and Assam as decided by the Prime Minister and to fix dates in consultation with the government.

On April 15, the government circulated a Cabinet note proposing to exclude the States of Assam, Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab from the general elections to the tenth Lok Sabha. Under Section 73 of the Representation of the People Act, elections to all the constituencies should be held in order to constitute a new Lok Sabha except those specifically excluded by law or postponed by the Election Commission. In earlier years, elections in certain States had been excluded by specific legislation.

However, the evening dailies carried the news that the government had decided to exclude only Jammu and Kashmir, whereas elections in Assam and Punjab would be held in the normal course. On the evening of April 16, a proposal for issuing of an ordinance excluding only Jammu and Kashmir was submitted to me. It meant that elections would be conducted in Assam and Punjab along with other states in order to constitute the tenth Lok Sabha. The Chief Election Commissioner met me the next day and said that the government would not be able to provide sufficient security to candidates or deploy adequate security forces to ensure free and fair elections in Assam and Punjab at the same time when these were required all over India. Subramaniam Swamy called on me along with the Attorney-General and expressed a desire to avoid any confrontation with the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Election Commission. He was of the view that dates for poll in Assam and Punjab could be fixed within two to three weeks after the conclusion of polling in other parts of India so that adequate security forces were moved to these two states. I told Subramaniam Swamy that the President was not concerned with fixing dates for the poll and that he should discuss it with the Election Commission.

April 17 was the birthday of Chandra Shekhar. He had gone to his farmhouse outside the city to celebrate it and was not expected to return till late in the evening. I had to take a decision on the draft ordinance as time was running out. The ordinance had to be issued before midnight of April 18.

It was my view that in the disturbed conditions in Assam and Punjab free and fair elections were not possible and that elections would lead to terrorism against candidates, voters and the election staff. I also felt that the government would not be able to provide adequate security in these two States when its resources were stretched all over India. The near unanimity of views of the political parties — the Congress, the BJP and the Left Front — against poll in these States was another factor to be taken note of. So I decided to return the file for reconsideration of the Cabinet. I wrote in the file that under Article 74(1) of the Constitution, "I advise the Council of Ministers to include Assam and Punjab along with Jammu and Kashmir in para (2) of the draft ordinance submitted to me." This was despatched around 3 p.m. on April 17.

At 11 a.m. on April 18, Subramaniam Swamy and the Attorney-General called on me and conveyed that the Cabinet had reiterated its earlier recommendation to exclude only Jammu and Kashmir. They added that poll in Assam and Punjab could be delayed by a few days to enable proper security arrangements. I replied that I would abide by the Constitution and accept the recommendation of the Ministry and that the fixing of poll dates might be done in consultation

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

with the Election Commission. They also said that the Prime Minister felt that the President could have consulted him before returning the draft ordinance. I told them that I had felt likewise that the Prime Minister could have talked to me before forwarding the ordinance for my approval. The formal advice from the Cabinet reached me late in the evening and notifications were issued before midnight on April 18.

The CPI(M), the BJP, and the Congress (I) bitterly criticised the government for calling elections in Assam and Punjab. The Congress (I) wanted to bring a delegation of ten members to make representations against the notification. I said I had nothing more to do after the issue of the notification, and if necessary, P.V. Narasimha Rao could come and speak to me. Narasimha Rao severely criticised the decision to hold elections in Punjab. He said that militants would render the election a farce and that it would sow the seeds for the dismemberment of the country. I asked him to suggest what I could do under the Constitution. He vaguely suggested exercise of my extraordinary powers in the interest of unity and integrity of the country and my declining to accept the advice of the minority government. I did not agree with his view of the powers of the President. I politely told him that I would strictly abide by the Constitution and would not stray beyond it. He left with a look of disappointment on his face.

The election process commenced with the Election Commission issuing the notification setting out the poll schedule for each State including Assam and Punjab. Polling for all the 13 Lok Sabha seats in Punjab and 14 seats in Assam was fixed for May 20 and May 23 respectively. A piquant situation arose as soon as the dates of poll in Assam and Punjab were announced. The Home Ministry is reported to have said that this did not take into account the security needs of the candidates and that it could not provide all the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

required protection in Assam and Punjab during elections all over India.

I was informed that the Home Secretary had communicated in writing to Seshan that elections in Assam and Punjab should be held on a later date to ensure sufficient security arrangements. The Election Commission said that it had the power to postpone elections under Section 153 of the Representation of the People Act "for reasons it considers sufficient". Thus an absurd situation arose in which candidates had to file nominations and go through the scrutiny and withdrawal processes without the date for poll being announced.

The Prime Minister met me on April 21 and said that he should have sent the Cabinet Secretary to explain his original intention to hold elections in Punjab and Assam after the elections in the rest of the country and was apologetic about it. I told him that it was good that our respective perceptions about elections in Assam and Punjab were placed on record and that there was no need to feel unhappy about it.

The Prime Minister then mentioned that the situation in Bihar was worse and Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav had openly declared that whatever be the voting, his men would be declared elected. He wondered if President's Rule could be imposed in Bihar. I told the Prime Minister that I had seen reports of the Chief Minister's statement and had drawn the attention of the Election Commission to it. I said the Commission had wide powers to prevent electoral malpractices. I also said that dismissal of the ministry could not be sustained and might even prove counter-productive as it would make the Chief Minister a martyr, and the Prime Minister agreed.

The Prime Minister told me that wherever he went he met enthusiastic crowds which had gathered spontaneously. But he had neither the organisation nor the money to mobilise them for polls. There was no hope that he would win a

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

majority of seats but the general expectation was that he would gain sufficient strength to bargain for position in a "hung" Parliament after the elections.

A lot of disinformation was spread that the Bihar Governor had sent a special report recommending President's Rule and postponement of elections but there was no substance in it. I also issued a circular letter to all Governors not to leave their states so that they would be readily available for the conduct of fair and free polls.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

35

It has been the convention that a government which was asked to carry on the administration till alternative arrangements were made should not take policy decisions or commit the future government to heavy financial burdens. This was conveyed to the Cabinet Secretary and, in turn, to other secretaries. Reports reached me that liberal telephone connections and gas and petrol outlets were being sanctioned by the ministers concerned. I did not attach weight to these allegations as they were minor issues.

During the first week of April, a Cabinet note came to me bearing the decision to license a large number of sugar mills. During the time V.P. Singh headed a caretaker government after his defeat in the Lok Sabha, a similar peremptory decision was taken to license a large number of sugar mills on the basis of a new licensing formula. There was widespread suspicion that these might be fund-raising operations. When the minutes of the Cabinet meeting came to me, I noted that the decision should be deferred till the newly elected government was formed. V.P. Singh honoured my advice and refrained from proceeding further.

This time, the Chandra Shekhar government wanted to issue new licences on the plea that this was to be done according to existing guidelines and that no new policy was involved. I pointed out that issue of new licences and

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

contracts during the course of an election was against the norms of democratic practice and would lead to malicious propaganda against the government. Chandra Shekhar readily agreed and observed the convention in spirit.

On April 4, 1991 a decision of the government to award a contract for $472.5 million to Hyundai Heavy Industries Co. of South Korea for development of the Neelam Process Complex was circulated. The Neelam Process Complex is an offshore oilfield off Bombay with good prospects. Earlier when tenders for the works were called there were two bidders, H.H.I. and a Japanese consortium. The latter was disqualified for certain reasons and H.H.I., being the single tenderer, bagged the contract. It increased its price from $450 million to $470 million between July 1990 to March 1991. Considering the heavy commitment of $472 million on a single tender, I minuted that the proposal should be deferred till the formation of the new government.

Chandra Shekhar had himself issued guidelines earlier that no heavy financial commitments should be made during the interim period pending elections. When this was communicated to the government, Satya Prakash Malaviya, Minister for Petroleum; Subramaniam Swamy, Minister for Law; and the Attorney-General called on me on April 8. They argued that the decision to accept the H.H.I. tender had been approved by the earlier government, and since only signing of the contract remained, it was not a new commitment. But I reiterated my objection to entering into any heavy commitment and said that the H.H.I. might be advised to extend the date by a few weeks. Then Subramaniam Swamy asked me whether I was returning the file for reconsideration by the Cabinet under Article 74. I realised then the purpose of the Attorney-General's presence with the Ministers. I made it clear that I had tendered my advice to defer this proposal and it was for the government to decide whether to

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

honour it. Subramaniam Swamy then asked me what would follow if the government did not accept my advice. I said I would examine the President's responsibilities in such matters under the Constitution and act accordingly. I said I had several options. Subramaniam Swamy met me again on April 15 and aggressively pleaded for approving the H.H.I. contract. He wanted to roam over the point that it was not really necessary to seek approval of the President at all as all formalities had been completed before the resignation of the previous government and that the present government would prefer completing the contract. I reminded Subramaniam Swamy that the present Ministry had been asked to continue till a new government was formed and that it should abide by the norms.

Subramaniam Swamy spoke to me about purchase of Boeing aircraft. I told him that the same objection to the caretaker Ministry entering into heavy commitments would apply to that case. He said that the last date was April 20 for finalising the deal and that the contract was of crucial importance to the country. He also expressed concern that the Boeing Company might increase the price if the contract was not concluded on the due date. I felt bound to preserve the norms to be observed by a caretaker administration. So I advised Subramaniam Swamy to ask for extension of time from the Boeing Company. On these and several such matters, Chandra Shekhar honoured the convention and observed them dutifully even though he might have disliked some of these restrictions.

India has always had very close and friendly relations with Vietnam. Part of French Indo-China, Vietnam was abandoned to its fate by the French when the invading Japanese army reached it in 1942. The Vietnamese resistance movement gathered strength and momentum during Japanese occupation. When Japan surrendered in 1945, the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

French wanted to return and reassert their rights over these territories. But the resistance movement under the legendary hero Ho Chi Minh declared Vietnam independent in 1946 at the historic Ba Dinh Square in Hanoi. From then till the defeat of the American forces in 1973, the country had been consigned to the whirlpool of perpetual struggle and turmoil. President Rajendra Prasad visited North Vietnam in 1959. After the exit of the U.S. forces, unification of North and South Vietnam took place and I was the first Indian President to visit the unified country. Jawaharlal Nehru had a great admiration for Ho Chi Minh and each had great respect and regard for the other. In this background, my visit was hailed by the government and the people of Vietnam as a major event.

On April 24, we left for Hanoi at 9.30 a.m. after the usual ceremonial send-off. We travelled by an Airbus 310 which did not have the space and comfort of Boeing 747. The flight took four hours and we arrived at the international airport Noi Bai at 3 p.m. local time. There was a brief welcome by the protocol and then we left for Hanoi city, which was a 45-minute drive from the airport. At the Chi Linh Square we were met by President Vo Chi Cong and other dignitaries. The Secretary General of the Communist Party, Nguyen Van Linh was not present. Formal introductions were followed by inspection of a guard of honour. At the end of the line I congratulated the parade and wished them success and prosperity according to their local custom. Vietnamese and Indians lined up to greet our delegation. It was followed by children lustily cheering and waving Vietnamese and Indian flags and the Young Pioneers vigorously beating their drums. Those gaily dressed lovely children in uniforms would never have one believe that Vietnam is a poor country.

Thereafter both delegations moved to the state room in the guest house. After a brief welcome by Vo Chi Cong and

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

my response, we moved into our apartments. Before leaving for Hanoi we were told that the accommodation and amenities would not be of the usual standard and that the Vietnamese government was exerting its best to provide appropriate amenities. However, I found the accommodation and facilities quite satisfactory and convenient.

The protocol officer explained to me that they had not received a head of state in recent years and were at a loss as to how best to observe correct protocol. I put them at ease by saying that both countries were developing nations and would understand and appreciate each other's limitations.

The official banquet by the President was arranged at 6.30 p.m. according to their local practice. We arrived at the Presidential Palace, built during the French rule. It was grand and well decorated. The invitees filed past the guests of honour and the host President. I noticed that the wife of the President was not in the receiving line. I was informed that in Vietnam, as in China, the wife of the President did not participate in the state functions. Only women who hold positions attend the state functions.

At the banquet, Vietnam followed the Soviet practice of proposing toasts before dinner. Vietnam did not follow any of the old French practices because of memories of their bitter struggle. Welcoming the Indian delegation President Vo Chi Cong spoke warmly of the support extended by India during the prolonged struggle against the French and the Americans and after the unification. He looked forward to further strengthening and deepening of relations with India, particularly in trade. Vietnam wanted barter trade with India as it was facing an acute shortage of foreign exchange.

In reply I praised the Vietnamese for their courage, determination and sacrifices and for their skills and capacity for hard work. I said I was happy to visit Vietnam on such an auspicious occasion as the birth centenary of the immortal

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

hero Ho Chi Minh. I recalled the stirring words of Ho Chi Minh in his prison diary:

The body is in jail
But the spirit never.
For the great cause to prevail
Let the spirit rise for ever.

I referred to the vast opportunities for expanding economic and industrial relations between the two countries and promised to place our expertise and experience at their disposal.

After dinner there was an elegant cultural show. Vietnamese culture is a blend of Hindu, Buddhist and Chinese influences. The artists were exceptionally slim, like feathers, and very lithe and nimble. I recalled that their cultural team had visited India earlier and had created a deep impression.

At 9.30 a.m. on April 25, the ceremony of laying a wreath at the mausoleum of Ho Chi Minh was performed according to the customary military procedure. In the mausoleum we saw the embalmed body of the legendary leader. It was exactly like the Lenin mausoleum in Moscow. After paying respects to the departed leader we visited the cottage in which Ho Chi Minh lived and worked. On the ground floor there was an open hall with a simple table and a few chairs. Others, I was told, used to sit on a low parapet wall around the hall. On the first floor there was a sparsely furnished bedroom and a study. Ho Chi Minh slept on a mat and wore the clothes of an ordinary person. This immediately reminded me of the austerity of Gandhiji and the unique similarity between the two leaders. In 1955 Nehru had once told us that Ho Chi Minh was the Gandhi of Vietnam.

There is a lovely pond in front of the cottage. Ho Chi Minh used to sit on its bank and feed the fish everyday. We also

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

offered fish feed and saw a number of big fishes rushing toward us.

We then proceeded to the Presidential Palace for official talks. President Ho Chi Cong, after the usual courtesies, made the following observations:

Soviet assistance to Vietnam, which had been substantial in the past, was declining because of its own resource crunch and increasing developmental needs. (The President mentioned it as a fact and not as a criticism of a friendly country).

China was not prepared to normalise relations with Vietnam unless the Cambodian problem was settled to China's satisfaction. The summit meeting between the two countries in June had failed to achieve any im-provement in relations.

The ban on assistance to Vietnam by the United States, not only from its own resources but also from multilateral agencies like the World Bank and the IMF, was hurting Vietnam severely.

Vietnam had withdrawn all its forces from Cambodia while others were giving surreptitious help to the Khmer Rouge faction and arming it to the teeth to fight the government forces. The President said Vietnam wanted that a special national commission in Cambodia, consis-ting of the four factions, should decide the future of the country.

The President referred to the party congress to be held in June, and discussions on the "draft platform building socialism" and the "socio-economic strategy up to 2000 A.D." He said the party congress would decide on liberalisation of the economy and measures to accelerate economic growth and development. He hinted that Vietnam was not in favour of a multi-party system.

In my response I referred to the high esteem in which Ho Chi Minh was held in India and the measures we had taken

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

to honour him during the centenary year. I recalled that we issued a commemorative stamp on Ho Chi Minh, named a road after him and held a seminar in Calcutta in which General Giap, the war hero of Vietnam, participated. I mentioned that India had given generous aid to the tune of Rs.250 crore and had provided training facilities for Vietnamese. On Cambodia, I expressed appreciation of the complete and genuine withdrawal of Vietnamese forces and endorsed the view that the problem should be settled by the people of Cambodia themselves without any external pressures or interference. I added that we supported the movement for an independent and non-aligned Cambodia. I cautioned against economic blocs substituting the political blocs and exploiting the Third World countries and called for greater South–South cooperation.

After this meeting I called on the venerable leader and former Prime Minister Pham Van Dong, who then was in his late eighties. He had visited India thrice and was a great admirer of Gandhiji. He told me that his ambition was to walk on the beach of India with a staff in hand, wearing sandals. I invited him to do so immediately and promised every facility.

In the evening there was a civic reception at the Ba Dinh Hall, which was packed to capacity. The President, the Prime Minister and other ministers and elite of Hanoi were present. A few rows were occupied by lovely children who behaved with extraordinary discipline and decorum.

In my speech, which was translated para by para, I said it was an honour to be in this Hall where Ho Chi Minh had read his Declaration of Independence in 1945. Mahatma Gandhi and Ho Chi Minh inspired the common people to become heroes in the freedom struggle and to sacrifice their lives for the cause. I quoted a poem written to Jawaharlal Nehru by Ho Chi Minh from jail, which runs as follows:

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Thousand miles apart,
We have not met.
We communicate
Without words,
Shared ideas link you and me.

I said that even before Independence, two brave young men participating in a demonstration in Calcutta in support of the freedom struggle in Vietnam had died in police firing. Later in the 1950s, resonance of the Bengali slogan *"Amaar nam, Tomaar nam Vietnam, Vietnam"* was heard throughout India. The rest of the speech contained the familiar appeal for cooperation in building a new society based on an equitable world order.

The speech was received with standing ovation for several minutes. Perhaps my quotations from Ho Chi Minh touched their hearts, my references to their heroic struggle kindled their pride and my reference to a new economic order raised hopes of a happier future. We won the hearts of the Vietnamese people.

In the evening, General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh hosted a family dinner for members of my family. Linh and his wife were my guests at the Republic Day celebrations in January 1990. After exchange of pleasantries, the General Secretary made some candid observations. He said that after perestroika and the shift in Soviet policies, he saw further reduction in economic and political support from the Soviet Union.

He was not hopeful of a change in the attitude of China toward Vietnam despite withdrawal of troops from Cambodia as desired by China and the United States. He felt that the Chinese, who expected the collapse of the Hun Sen government in Cambodia after the withdrawal of the Vietnamese troops, were disappointed and annoyed with

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Vietnam. He repeated that India was their most reliable friend.

A visit to the beauty spot Ha Long Bay was arranged on the morning of April 26. The bay on the South China Sea is studded with more that 3,000 islands. These rock islands are in fantastic shapes of animals and birds and they sparkled in the morning sun. We went on a cruise, criss-crossing through rocks and enjoyed the marvellous beauty of nature. On board, Vietnamese girls entertained us with some light music. I wore their straw hats and posed for pictures with almost every one who wanted it.

It was a most enjoyable excursion and I had to tear myself away from the place. During my stay I met Prime Minister Do Moui and Foreign Minister Co Thatch and discussed the general conditions. Co Thatch told me that the Chinese did not like him and wanted him to be removed from office. He said that the Chinese wanted to have a say, along with the Big Two, America and Soviet Union, in Pacific affairs. Co Thatch was for complete liberalisation of the economy and opening up to the West in a substantial way. I understood that despite his competence he did not wield much political clout.

The visit to the Army Museum was both interesting and educative. A working sand model of the final battle of Dien Bien Phu, where the French forces were defeated, was displayed. A pre-recorded cassette gave full details of the movements of forces and the strategies adopted. Photographs of critical assaults and the heroes of the action were displayed prominently. Heaps of destroyed arms and equipment were stored in several places. Thousands of children visit the museum. It is a constant reminder to them of the sufferings and sacrifices by their forebears for freedom and liberty. This, like the War Cemetery in Leningrad where a million people died during the 1000-day siege in the World War II, creates an indelible impression in young minds of the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

price that their fathers and forefathers had paid for freedom of the present generation. It is a pity India has not built a museum of its freedom struggle.

The departure ceremony was gay and colourful. The Young Pioneers beat drums and children waved flags. Officials shook hands warmly and the President bade an affectionate farewell. I invited him to visit India which pleased him visibly. It looked as if New Delhi was a Mecca to the Vietnamese leaders.

From Hanoi we flew to Ho Chi Minh City (old Saigon). After the usual reception we drove from Nhat airport to the state guest house. On either side of the road we saw nice buildings of the French days. I asked the officer escorting us whether these buildings were damaged during the war and had been rebuilt in the same style. The officer explained that during the heavy bombing by the U.S. Air Force, all surrounding areas were destroyed barring Saigon city which was spared as Americans were still living there. During the French rule, the Saigon used to be called the "Paris of the East". It is a well laid out, prosperous city with one of the finest harbours on the mouth of the Saigon river. There were a number of Tamils who had gone to Saigon years earlier and had become very prosperous. However, after the revolution, their assets were nationalised without compensation.

The state guest house was better furnished than the one in Hanoi. In the afternoon we visited the handicrafts and lacquer showrooms. The lacquer works are not on wood but on layers of silk and are embedded with mother of pearl. The artisans polished these objects with the palm of their hands and only very small tools for cutting were used. The skill of the people of the East is matchless.

Our Consul General hosted a reception in the evening to afford an opportunity to the Indian community to meet me. Some very old residents spoke to me in Tamil. They had built

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

a Mariamman temple and wanted the jewels of the temple which had been taken over by the government, to be returned to them. The Consul General explained that attempts were made earlier to take these jewels to India but the move was resisted tooth and nail by the Vietnamese government. If the people agreed to retention of jewels in the temple in Ho Chi Minh city he could move in the matter. I advised the Indian community to move away from money-lending business to small scale industries and thereby earn goodwill of the local people.

The cultural show after the dinner, which was hosted by the General Secretary of the party, was very impressive. The 'Cham' dance has many features of the South Indian Bharatanatyam. Around the tenth century A.D. Tamils had crossed the sea to the area later known as Indo-China. Their influence is visible even today in the Angkor Vat Temple in Cambodia. The Cham dynasty had come from India and ruled over this region around that period. Their cultural show revealed the Indian influences. The elfin artists, their soft steps and melodious music made the show memorable.

On the morning of April 28, we went round the Dragon Harbour and were impressed by the size, magnitude and the latest gear used for handling cargo. Years earlier, as member of the Planning Commission and chairman of the Major Ports Commission, I had studied the working of ports and I plied the harbour authorities with questions on container facilities, roll-on and roll-off clearance of cargo, etc. They were surprised that the President of a country knew so much about harbour administration.

The departure ceremony was a simple one. The Vietnamese officials, the Indian community and Ambassador Sarma and the Consul General saw us off.

We arrived in Manila, the Philippines capital, at 4 p.m. local time on Sunday, April 28. At the Ninoy Aquino airport,

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

named after Aquino, the opposition leader assassinated by persons alleged to be President Marcos' men, we were met by Foreign Minister Raul Manglapus who had visited India early in 1991. The official welcome ceremony was to be held in the Presidential Palace, the Malacanang Palace, as in India.

President Corazon Aquino welcomed me and the First Lady and introduced to us the President of the Senate and members of the Cabinet. After the national anthems of both countries were played and a guard of honour inspected, top defence personnel, members of the diplomatic corps and invited members of the Indian community were introduced. We took leave of President Aquino and went to Manila Hotel where we were put up. Manila Hotel is the most prestigious place in the Philippines. In the roll of honoured guests were General MacArthur, heads of state and government and other luminaries. I was put up in the penthouse on the 18th floor, which offered an enchanting view of the bay and the city beyond.

The next day commenced with a solemn and impressive wreath-laying ceremony at Rizal Park. This is a monument for one of the martyrs in the struggle for freedom from Spanish rule. On December 30, 1896, Dr. Jose Rizal was executed at that spot by a firing squad in public view for the offence of instigating a revolt against the Spanish Government.

The talks at the Presidential Palace commenced immediately after the Rizal Park ceremony. They consisted of three parts, the first between the members of the two families, the second, a one-to-one talk with Corazon Aquino without aides and the third, formal discussions between the two delegations.

In the one-to-one discussions, Aquino expressed surprise at the smooth manner in which the parliamentary crisis that loomed large in India for the past six months was resolved.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

She wanted to know the relative advantages of the parliamentary system and the presidential system. I explained that in the presidential form of government obtaining in the Philippines there was stability of administration for the fixed term of the President, and to that extent it was good for developing countries. Frequent changes in government in the parliamentary form with a multi-party system hindered economic development and adoption of medium-term policies. At the same time, a President elected on a manifesto might not be able to implement the programme, as he or she is not the leader of the majority in the legislature. In the parliamentary system the Prime Minister, as the leader of the majority party, could put through his programmes easily and expeditiously, I pointed out. However, if the electorate did not give a clear mandate to one party, instability might set in. I said that countries like Canada, Australia and New Zealand, with strong Anglo-Saxon traditions, had a well-defined two-party system and the parliamentary form worked satisfactorily there. In India, till 1989 (excepting in 1977), the Congress Party enjoyed political hegemony and therefore carried on a stable government. But the general elections in 1989 produced a 'hung' Parliament and the country was mired in political instability.

Aquino wanted to know about the functioning of the multi-party system in India. I explained that members elected on the party ticket could not cross over to another party or disobey the whip issued by the party. If they did, the Speaker had the power to disqualify them from membership of the House. I cited the case of the Speaker disqualifying five members of Parliament for violating the whip. If, however, one-third or more of a party left the party it was recognised as a split and members were absolved from penalty under the anti-defection law. Aquino said that crossing the floor happened very often in her country.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Dealing with trade and industrial collaboration, the Philippines President praised India's progress in steel, fertiliser, textiles, chemicals and pharmaceuticals and wanted to have joint ventures. She said if India could buy more from the Philippines, it would enable her to expand purchases of so many essential things from India.

Aquino referred to the problem of the Muslim minority in the southern province of Mindanao and the pressures exerted by the Islamic Conference. She said that she was ready to grant autonomy for these minority areas but was not prepared to create a separate state. She said that the problem was similar to what India was facing in Kashmir.

At this stage we were reminded that we were already late for the formal delegation level meeting and so adjourned to the next hall. At the official talks, the Philippines was represented by the President, the Foreign Minister, other Cabinet members and some senior bureaucrats. On our side we had, besides me, the President's secretary, Secretary (East) to the External Affairs Ministry, Ambassador Satish Chandra and officers.

While welcoming the Indian delegation, President Aquino referred to my visit as the first by a President since India attained Independence and hoped that a new chapter of greater cooperation between the two countries would be opened. Apart from repeating the points already mentioned, Aquino made two significant statements:

(1) The Philippines believed that the issue relating to Kashmir should be settled by negotiations and discussions between India and Pakistan in accordance with the Simla Agreement. (It was refreshing to hear the new approach from Philippines as it had been a member of the South East Asia Treaty Organisation [SEATO] along with Pakistan and had toed the American line on Kashmir in the United Nations for

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

decades. It also represented Aquino's departure from the former President Marcos' policy.

(2) The Philippines categorically condemned the racial discrimination in Fiji. Aquino said that it was understood that they have accorded to the majority ethnic community, the Indians, a minority position in Parliament. This was in contrast to the ambivalent attitude of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) of which the Philippines is a member. Had Australia and New Zealand taken a firm stand on the coup against a democratically elected government in Fiji, there would have been no deprival of political rights to the people of Indian origin in Fiji.

I thanked Aquino very warmly for her sagacious and objective stand on Kashmir and Fiji. We had two agreements, one cooperation in the peaceful uses of atomic energy and another for cooperation in agriculture, signed by the officials. The two Presidents formally exchanged the documents. So cordial and warm were the discussions that we exceeded the time allotted by a full half hour. I extended an invitation to President Aquino to pay a state visit to India. While thanking me, she felt she had little time before the next Presidential election.

Though the Presidential election was only in June 1992, Aquino had announced her reluctance to seek a second term. During her time, there were as many as seven coup attempts, the last being a serious one with 6,000 army men revolting against the administration. It was the timely intervention of the U.S. Air Force that saved the situation. In her period the dependence on the United States had been reduced and there was pressure on her to deny renewal of the naval base to the USA.

After the talks, we made a tour of the Malacanang Palace

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

and saw the large collection of rare pieces of art and wood carvings. When we saw the apartment of the previous President Marcos and his wife Imelda, we were disgusted by the vulgar display of wealth and their lifestyle. One room was full of Imelda's shoes — 1800 pairs, I was told. Another was full of embroidered dresses from the East and the finest cut clothes from the West. The wash-basin was plated with gold. Even monarchs of medieval times did not indulge in this kind of ostentation.

We then saw the famous Cathedral of St. Augustine built by the Spanish three hundred years ago. The Chaplain explained the history of the Cathedral and how its precious artifacts had been taken away by different people including the Japanese during the World War II. But whatever was left was grand and imposing. We were told that 90 percent of the people of the Philippines were Catholics. There was an old fort named Fort Santiago, which according to legend belonged to the native rulers of the Philippines and had been rebuilt by Spanish rulers.

At 7.30 p.m. the President hosted a state banquet for our delegation. On arrival at the Malacanang Palace we were met by the President and escorted to a private room where we exchanged gifts. We presented a beautifully crafted bronze piece of Nataraja, the dancing deity, and received a lovely casket inlaid with coral pieces. After introductions, we moved to the ceremonial hall where guests were seated around a number of tables scattered all over the hall. As in the Soviet Union, toasts were proposed before the dinner.

Aquino welcomed the Indian delegation and said much the same about trade, economic cooperation and friendship between the two countries spelt out in the earlier discussions. She showed genuine eagerness for increased interaction between our two countries.

In reply I recalled my meeting with President Aquino in

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Tokyo in February 1989 and the valuable exchange of views we had at that time. I referred to the Philippines as the "Pearl of the Orient Sea" and to its picturesque beauty, grace and charm. I complimented the President on her historic role in redeeming the Philippines from autocratic rule and ushering in democratic values in public life. Adverting to the international situation, I described the Gulf crisis, the continuing strife in Afghanistan, Cambodia and the unresolved Palestinian question as flash-points for wider conflagration. I hoped that Indo–Philippines relations would be a model for South–South cooperation.

The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Philippines was sitting next to me. We talked about the judicial system and disposal of cases. He said that as in the Supreme Court of America they relied more on written briefs and not on lengthy arguments running for days and weeks. The oral presentation was limited to one hour for each side. The Judge wanted to know about the public interest litigation and how it helped justice. I told him that within limits it is a salutary system and secured speedy justice to the aggrieved. At the same time the tendency to abuse this extraordinary remedy needed to be countered lest it might degenerate into public nuisance litigation. I said that it was under reasonable control in India and that it had helped to voice public grievances which affected the whole or a class of people. There was a pleasant cultural show after dinner.

The Philippines University is a prestigious 85-year-old institution. Several eminent men from all over the world had addressed it from time to time. I was flattered when the University wanted to confer the degree of Doctor of Laws (honoris causa) on me. The University had earlier conferred doctorates on Vijayalakshmi Pandit and Justice Hidayatullah from India. In the citation, the University, after adverting to my work in the national administration and in

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

the United Nations, said:

> And finally for Your leadership at the crucial juncture as the eighth President of the Republic of India in steering her through difficult times towards the goal of greater progress and prosperity for Your people, serving as the ultimate symbol of India's unity in the midst of vast diversity of her cultural history.

Besides the intellectual elite, about 20 ambassadors were present as they were interested in knowing what I would say on the theme, "Developing countries in a changing world"

In my acceptance speech I said that the newly independent countries of the Third World had no capital for investment. Even the small surpluses they created were absorbed in meeting primary requirements of life, and massive investments to make up for the lost time could not be raised by the private sector. The state had to step in a big way to provide heavy investments in infrastructure such as power, steel, fertilisers, communications and transport. Having been left behind by colonial masters during the period when the Industrial Revolution overtook the world, the newly independent countries had to telescope centuries of progress within decades to catch up with the rest of the world. That was the reason for the emergence of the public sector as the dominant force in the economy. I pointed out that even as the private sector alone could not meet the developmental needs of the emerging economies, so too the public sector alone could not find the answer to the huge and ever-increasing demands of the people. A mixed economy in which the public and private sectors played a complementary role emerged not out of socio-economic theory but out of a practical necessity.

I asserted that the free market was no panacea for all economic ills and that even the countries which preached it had several restrictions such as quotas for import. Countries

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

with a market economy also had financial and exchange crises.

I dealt with the ever-growing debt burden of the developing countries and brought out the unconscionable fact that developing countries had become net exporters of capital to the developed countries. I said that in the medium term, the international system should seek to transfer to developing countries a substantial part of the surplus saving of countries like Japan and Germany. I pointed out that while developing countries were clamouring for worthwhile international action to help them, the developed countries were talking of global environment, drug traffic and extension of GATT regulations to services and intellectual properties. I emphasised that developing countries could not give up their struggle for a fair and equitable new world order. They should restructure their domestic economies based on self-help and self-reliance and thus acquire sufficient bargaining strength to face the challenges.

The speech which was overweighted in favour of the Third World countries had a mixed reception, the developing countries describing it as a bold assertion of their rights and the developed countries regarding it as the usual claptrap of the have-nots. To the Philippine elite fed on American propaganda on the virtues of a free market, my speech came as a bolt from the blue. To a query from one of them I asked him why the U.S. had the most stringent protection for a hundred years after its independence.

In the afternoon we went to a tourist resort, Tagaytay, overlooking a volcano. The vast expanse of undulating terrain with lakes and a volcano in the middle was an unforgettable sight. The volcano, we were told, sometimes erupted but hardly caused any damage. There is a nice rest house where tourists can stay and enjoy the scenery.

On May 1, a number of Indian employees of the Asian

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Development Bank who had worked with me earlier in India called on me and spent some time with me.

The Indian and the Philippines Televisions interviewed me. I said that the talks with the President and other leaders were fruitful and opened up possibilities of greater cooperation between the Philippines and India. I hoped that the agreements for cooperation on peaceful uses of atomic energy and agriculture would be the forerunner of many more. I thanked the Philippines government for its stand on Kashmir and its disapproval of racial discrimination against the people of Indian origin in Fiji.

The departure ceremony was as colourful as the rece-p-tion. President Aquino had talked to us freely and frankly without any reservations and had supported India's stand on two major issues, Kashmir and Fiji. I felt India had gained a friend by this visit. I reiterated my invitation to her to pay a state visit to India. We returned to India at 8.30 p.m. the same day.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

36

After my return to Delhi the first person to meet me was T.N. Seshan, Chief Election Commissioner. He told me of the arrangements he had made for "observers" in various states to supervise and oversee the conduct of elections. He said he had issued a severe warning against electoral malpractices and had also threatened postponement, countermanding, and cancellation of polls in case of abuse or misuse during the electoral process. His tough posture, though it earned him unpopularity, had nonetheless some salutary effect. The Director of the Intelligence Bureau briefed me on the law and order situation in general and in Bihar in particular. He said that out of the 54 parliamentary constitutencies in Bihar, 20 were badly affected and no fair poll was possible there. In another 15, there was a possibility of rigging and booth capturing. He feared that unless central forces were deployed on a massive scale no free and fair poll was possible.

The same evening Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar met me and conveyed his anxiety about conditions in Bihar. I opined that neither the wholesale cancellation of elections in Bihar nor placing the state under President's Rule was feasible or desirable. I said the Election Commissioner had the power to order repoll or countermand the election in the affected constituencies and that he must be allowed to exercise his functions appropriately. V.R. Krishna Iyer,

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

former judge of the Supreme Court, called on me and pleaded that Independent Initiative, an organisation of eminent persons, should be allowed to oversee the elections and make observations to the Election Commission. He was also in favour of including members from the SAARC countries. I did not respond to the suggestion as I was of the view that any such action was outside the purview of the President's functions.

A new feature of this election was the cassette war among the contesting parties; both audio and video cassettes were freely used to incite passions. Jayalalitha of the AIADMK and Karunanidhi of the DMK in Tamil Nadu vied with each other in this slanging match. One of the DMK's video cassettes sought justice from the electorate against the "unjust dismissal of their government". In that cassette, the President was described as "Pattukottai Iyer" to highlight the so-called Brahmin bias against Karunanidhi. The President was also shown as changing his glasses into a dark one when signing the proclamation. There was another scene of slaughter of an infant (democracy) and the blood spilling on the President. Chandra Shekhar and Rajiv Gandhi were lampooned as doing the bidding of Jayalalitha. The entire cassette was vulgar.

Thambi Durai of the AIADMK, a former Lok Sabha Deputy Speaker, called on me and gave a lurid account of the various scenes in the DMK cassette to provoke me into banning the cassette. I told him strongly that if the cassette was banned more people would be tempted to see it and it would gain undue publicity. In any event it was beneath my notice. Thambi Durai tried to argue with me but I did not yield. I also instructed my secretary Murari to advise the Tamil Nadu government not to ban the cassette. The state government came back with the answer that it only proposed to have the cassettes censored according to law.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

The first round of elections started on May 20 for 204 parliamentary constituencies. They were marred by a number of instances of violence, corrupt electoral practices, intimidation, rigging and connivance of the polling officers with these malpractices. A report from the Election Commission mentioned that Bihar was the worst affected. There were reports from the people as well as in the press that the Bihar Chief Minister himself was leading a convoy and visiting polling booths and encouraging malpractices in Patna where the Janata Dal(S) candidate, Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha, was contesting against I.K. Gujral, former Minister of Foreign Affairs as the Janata Dal candidate. The Election Commission had to resort to the drastic action of countermanding the election in that constituency. In a few other constituencies, the poll was postponed in all or some booths. At Meerut in U.P. communal rioting flared up causing serious loss of life. The Election Commission came under severe attack from one or the other of the affected parties but Seshan stood his ground and handled the situation with firmness.

On May 21, at 10.45 at night, Seshan rang me up and said that Rajiv Gandhi had been assassinated at Sriperumbudur near Madras. I was shocked and did not want to believe it. I asked Seshan to check again and come back to me. Within a few minutes he confirmed the tragic news and gave some details of Rajiv Gandhi's alighting from a car and proceeding to the dais to address an election meeting. As a woman was offering him a bouquet, a bomb went off blowing up Rajiv Gandhi, killing a dozen people and injuring scores of others.

I was told that Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar was on tour in Orissa. I had a message sent immediately asking him to return and come to Rashtrapati Bhavan from the airport. I also asked the Cabinet Secretary, the Home Secretary, the Chief Election Commissioner, the Chief of the Army Staff and

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

my secretary to meet around midnight in my office for consultation. The tragic events in Delhi following the assassination of Indira Gandhi flashed in my mind and I wanted to prevent a recurrence.

I was also worried about possible trouble from unfriendly neighbours taking undue advantage of the turmoil likely to follow the assassination. Besides, the next round of election was to be held on May 23, and I was worried about peaceful polling in those areas. When I presented these problems to the group, the Cabinet Secretary, the Home Secretary, and the Chief of the Army Staff and the Chief of the Air Staff assured me that adequate military and paramilitary personnel could be deployed in vulnerable areas of Delhi and in border states. They also told me that a red alert would be issued throughout the country.

While these discussions were going on, R.K. Dhawan, who was personal assistant to Indira Gandhi and close to the family, rang me up and informed me that Sonia Gandhi wanted to proceed to Madras immediately and a plane and other facilities might be arranged at once. I told Dhawan that everything would be done and he could talk to Cabinet Secretary Naresh Chandra who was sitting with me. The Cabinet Secretary promised to get back as soon as arrangements were made and they would be informed.

I then received the news that Rajiv Gandhi's body had been taken to the General Hospital in Madras city. I felt it would be unsafe for Sonia Gandhi to go to Madras at such a time. I was deeply worried about the safety of Sonia and her daughter Priyanka in the disturbed conditions in Madras. Rahul was in the U.S. then, so I spoke to Priyanka this time. However, she insisted in their going to Madras.

Having made all arrangements for their visit, my wife and I left at 1 a.m. for Sonia Gandhi's residence to call on her. By that time a large crowd had gathered in front of 10 Janpath

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

and they were distraught, angry and frenzied. They not only stopped my car but fell on it, weeping and crying. My security staff wanted to clear the crowd but I stopped them and then turned back, preventing any unseemly occurrence.

The Prime Minister came straight from the airport to Rashtrapati Bhavan at 2.20 a.m. along with Subramaniam Swamy. We discussed the details of the law and order precautions already decided upon. The most important question of postponement of elections was then taken up. Some opined that a short postponement of the polls scheduled for May 23 was enough. Others wanted elections to be postponed without fixing a date. The Chief Election Commissioner was of the view that there should be sufficient time for security personnel to move from one area to another. Ultimately it was decided that the elections scheduled for May 23 be postponed to June 12, and those scheduled for May 26, to June 15. Everyone present concurred with this decision. The general feeling at the all-night meeting was one of grave apprehension of violence breaking out throughout the country once the news of the assassination spread. The Prime Minister wanted me to convey to the political parties the unpalatable decision regarding the postponement of the elections.

We received information of Sonia Gandhi and her party leaving for Madras. Then it occurred to me that in order to avoid Sonia Gandhi driving to the General Hospital, the body could be brought to Madras airport even before she landed there; she need not be exposed to the danger of driving into the city. Necessary instructions were sent to Madras to make these arrangements. It worked splendidly. Sonia Gandhi arrived in Madras at 4.45 a.m. and the special aircraft, after refuelling and taking in the former Prime Minister's body, started on its return journey to Delhi at 5.30 a.m. I was informed that it would arrive in Delhi at 8.20 a.m.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

There were poignant scenes when Rajiv Gandhi's body arrived at the Air Force technical area. Everyone present was choked with grief and hardly spoke to each other. Many were seen wiping their tears and even sobbing. I was at the airport to receive not the cheerful and smiling Rajiv Gandhi running down the steps but Sonia Gandhi who broke down as I approached her to offer some choked words of solace. The tragedy plunged the nation into gloom.

It was decided that the body should lie in state at the Teen Murti House, as in the case of his mother and grandfather, and the funeral take place on May 24 to enable foreign dignitaries to come and pay their last respects.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

37

After Rajiv Gandhi's body was placed in Teen Murti House on the morning of May 22, I went to pay my respects and lay the ceremonial wreath. I was followed by the Vice-President and the Prime Minister. A huge crowd had already gathered outside Teen Murti House and managing it had become a problem. Queues were formed and mourners were asked to keep moving to accommodate the ever-swelling crowd.

The Prime Minister called on me at 10.30 a.m. We reviewed the law and order situation and felt that though the city had been peaceful — thanks to deployment of the security forces overnight — the wrath of the people might explode any moment in the capital as well as in the entire country. I asked the Prime Minister what he thought of mooting the idea of a national government to meet the situation arising out of Rajiv Gandhi's assassination till the process of election to the Lok Sabha was complete. I felt that in this critical situation when the country was facing both a grave economic crisis and violence and turmoil, it was the patriotic duty of all political parties to shed their differences and pull together to demonstrate that India stood united in this hour of crisis. While Chandra Shekhar agreed with me on the need for a national consensus at this critical time in the nation's history, he was not sanguine about the proposal and his response was feeble.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education,Bantalab,Jammu

I then talked to Advani, leader of the BJP. Advani condemned the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi as a slur on the nation, and regretted the resort to large-scale electoral malpractices and the growing violence in the country. I explained to Advani the rationale of the decision to postpone the next round of polls. I said that a decision had to be taken immediately the previous night as the next round of polls was to commence on May 23. I explained that considering the orgy of violence that erupted after the assassination of Indira Gandhi and the highly explosive situation created by the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi by a brutal bomb blast, those who attended the meeting the previous night felt that postponement of the poll was imperative now and that dates were fixed to allow deployment of security forces in sensitive states. Advani, while appreciating the circumstances, felt that the postponement was too long. On the formation of a national government, he said he had to consult his party before giving a final word but was not against the idea if other political parties did not object to the BJP being a part of the national government. Advani asked me if the presidential form of government would not be more suitable to India. I replied that each system had its own advantages and limitations. In any event, the presidential form would need a constitutional amendment or even a new Constituent Assembly, according to the Kesavananda Bharati case judgment. I said for the limited purpose of ensuring fair elections and tiding over the crisis, a national government appeared to me to be a good proposition. When the question arose as to who would head the national government, I said if the parties wanted someone from outside the ranks of political parties, I would suggest Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma, the Vice-President, a mature, learned and non-controversial statesman.

When the Janata Party leader V.P. Singh met me at 12.30

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

p.m., I conveyed my concern for a free election and suggested that an all-party national government could take charge and ensure a smooth election and if necessary, it could continue in case there was a 'hung' Parliament. Janata Dal President Bommai had been enthusiastic about a similar suggestion I had made after the defeat of V.P. Singh. He said he would consult the National Front leaders who were meeting the same day.

Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu came at 8 p.m. To my surprise he was responsive to the idea of a government based on a broad consensus. He spoke of the difficulties of bringing about a national consensus as his party could not associate itself with the BJP. He, however, felt that like-minded parties could come together in case there was a 'hung' Parliament. Jyoti Basu, who had said after the defeat of the Congress Ministry in 1989 that the CPI(M) would not touch the Congress even with a pair of tongs, now said it was possible to work out a minimum programme and broad agreement on issues such as secularism and decentralisation, with the Congress (I). He promised to meet me before leaving Delhi.

Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the BJP leader, met me at my request. He warmly appreciated the idea of bringing about a national consensus and forming a national government. He said that he had supported the idea even in 1989 when no party had got a majority in the Lok Sabha.

I.K. Gujral, former Minister and Janata Dal candidate for Parliament from Patna, called on me and complained bitterly against the Election Commission's orders countermanding the election in Patna. He said that while cancellation of polling in certain polling booths was understandable, countermanding the election, necessitating fresh notification, nomination, etc., was arbitrary and high-handed. On the other hand, Yashwant Sinha, the J.D. (S) rival candidate, had accused the Chief Minister of Bihar of several

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

malpractices in the Patna constituency, including leading a cavalcade of cars from booth to booth and pressurising the polling officers. He also told me that Gujral was in one of the cars with the Chief Minister. These are really matters for agitation in an election petition and the President has nothing to do with the charges and counter-charges, and yet they come to the President in order to get publicity for their points of view.

The next morning when I looked at the newspapers, I was shocked to find totally distorted versions of my talks with the party leaders. I did not know what the party leaders had told the Press after my talks with them. Except *The Hindustan Times*, whose correspondent wrote that I mooted the idea of a "national government" to deal with the situation arising from Rajiv Gandhi's assassination till the process of election to the Lok Sabha was complete, others ranted hysterically with headlines like "President moots the idea of a national government," "Postponement of elections," "Cancellation of elections already held", "Convening a new constituent assembly" and "Changeover to presidential form of government". I did not take these reports seriously for any rejoinder would further fuel the controversy. In all the years I was President, I did not hold a single Press conference or give a Press interview on any official or personal matter. That was my way of keeping the office above controversy. The exaggerated reaction was a reflection of the tension people underwent in those days. Everything was suspect, every word sinister and every action motivated.

The postponement of the elections had hurt all the parties. The Opposition parties were sore because they had to sustain a costly election campaign for a longer period, severely straining their resources. The Congress(I) was apprehensive that the sympathy wave aroused by Rajiv Gandhi's assassination might cool off in the interval before

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

the polling. All parties, however, criticised the decision on the ground that the monsoon would set in in western India and hamper the elections. The Chief Election Commissioner was firm that no bringing forward of the dates announced was possible and thus he also became a target of attack.

Sanjiva Reddy, former President of India who had come for Rajiv Gandhi's funeral, had breakfast with me. We naturally talked about the void created in the Congress Party. I said that P.V. Narasimha Rao had been designated by Rajiv Gandhi as Chairman of the Coordination Committee to deal with the elections and was also the seniormost member now and that if he were elected interim or provisional President of the Congress organisation, the party might be held together. Before becoming President, Sanjiva Reddi was one of the stalwarts of the Congress. He was an effective Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh and later President of the Indian National Congress. He bemoaned deterioration in the Congress organisation and attributed it to the abandonment of democratic elections to party positions. He recalled the vigorous canvassing for elections to the Working Committee and the Parliamentary Board of the Congress and the healthy competitive spirit that prevailed in his days. I asserted that unless the Congress revived the democratic practices like annual sessions, the organisation would wither away.

Later in the day, P.V. Narasimha Rao and ten other Congressmen came to see me. They complained against the long postponement of the polling on the plea that the monsoon would upset the elections in the western region. Narasimha Rao wanted the polling dates advanced. I said that determination of the dates of the poll was within the purview of the Election Commission and that I would pass on the suggestion to him. The Gujarat Chief Minister also pleaded for advancing the dates of the elections.

N.T. Rama Rao and P. Upendra of the Telugu Desam

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Party met me and bitterly attacked the Andhra Pradesh Government. They said that three theatres belonging to Rama Rao had been burnt down causing a loss of Rs. 3 crores (thirty million) and that the state government should be dismissed and President's Rule imposed there. Strange are the ways of politicians in India. In one breath they ask for total repeal of Article 356 which empowers the Centre to clamp President's Rule in states and in another seek its exercise in their favour.

Chaturanan Misra, CPI member of Parliament, saw me and wanted to know the scope and details of my talks with party leaders the previous day. I explained that in view of the grave economic situation and the distured atmosphere in the country, I had suggested to the political parties that they form a national government for the purpose of conducting orderly elections and to continue it if circumstances necessitated it after the polls. I said that if a single party secured absolute majority, the question of a national government did not arise but if no party did, then I wanted to avoid another election. I told him that none of parties rejected the idea during my talks though the newspapers gave that impression. He said that he was taken aback by the kind of suggestions I was reported to have made to the party leaders. I merely replied I was not responsible for what others said.

As promised, Jyoti Basu and Harkishan Singh Surjeet of the CPI(M) called again. They said the proposal for a national government was not of immediate relevance and could be pursued later if it became necessary.

By this time I got reports of the thinking of the political parties. Each one thought that it would secure an absolute majority in the current elections. BJP was confident of either winning a majority on the basis of the fervour created by the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, or at least a dominant position in Parliament. The Janata Dal was confident of winning

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

hands down on the strength of the Mandal Commission Report. Congress was sure of winning on a sympathy wave as in the 1984 elections after Indira Gandhi's assassination and also on the poor performance of other parties. So, none was prepared to look at the realities of the situation or appraise it objectively. For several days the columnists fought, like the legendary Don Quixote, the demons alleged to have been let loose by me, such as the presidential form of government, a new constituent assembly, cancellation of elections and clamping an emergency. Even a novice would have known that the President of India had no powers to do any of these things except on the recommendation of the Council of Ministers. Anyway, the concept of a national government was still-born.

Nikhil Chakravartty, editor of *Mainstream*, is one of the rare species of value-based journalists. A leftist by conviction, he is a sober and dignified journalist with a wide and deep knowledge of national and international affairs. I have always found talks with him educative and exhilarating. I have similar high regard for H.K. Dua of *The Hindustan Times*. Dua is a well-informed and constructive writer and can interpret public opinion with uncanny precision. They both called on me to know what all the furore was about. I explained to them that my obsession for a national government asserted itself whenever there was a crisis and that I had put it forth earlier in November 1990 when the political process appeared to have broken down in India. I was of the firm belief that the crushing economic and financial problems of a country of our size could not be handled by a single party any longer without the cooperation and consent of the other political parties. I had stated it in my address to the nation on the eve of Republic Day. There was nothing new in the suggestion. If political parties did not accept it, the nation would suffer, perhaps irretrievably. They told me that

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

the political parties which had met me had given garbled versions of their talks to pressmen and that was how hot and spicy news spread about those startling ideas. I asked them for their suggestions for having a fair poll that would truly reflect the people's mind. They thought that a code of conduct for all parties should not only be adopted but observed scrupulously by the political organisations. I told them that I had a premonition of the events that had taken place. I had felt in 1989 that no party would get an absolute majority. Again now in 1991 I had the same feeling that no party would come out with a significant majority.

At 8 p.m., K. Ramamurthi, President of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee, paid me a visit. He looked dazed and shattered as he was present at the scene of the tragedy at Sriperumbudur on the night of May 21. He was also a target of criticism for the inadequate security arrangements made for Rajiv Gandhi. He said that despite his advice to the All India Congress Committee to have no more programmes in Tamil Nadu for Rajiv Gandhi after the last one on May 18, the programme in Sriperumbudur was foisted on him. He said that arrangements were rushed through at the last minute. He suspected that the LTTE was behind the assassination and that I too was on its hit list. He was confident that the Congress-AIADMK alliance would sweep the polls, but if violence was let loose before the polling, it might mar the situation.

Foreign dignitaries started pouring into Delhi to pay homage to the departed leader. As many as 64 countries sent their representatives to participate in the funeral, an attendance far larger than for Indira Gandhi. The King of Bhutan, a great friend and admirer of Rajiv Gandhi, was the first to call. His Majesty was deeply hurt by the brutal assassination and spoke of his close relations with Rajiv Gandhi. He looked forward to continued and strengthened relations with India.

From early morning, the visiting dignitaries placed

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

wreaths on the body of Rajiv Gandhi lying in state in Teen Murti House. Thereafter they called on me, the Vice-President and the Prime Minister. Every one of them referred to the tragic loss of "one of the outstanding statesmen of the world". The Prime Minister of Mauritius was grateful for the valuable cooperation extended to the Government and the people of Mauritius. The Vice-President of the USSR mentioned the special relationship Rajiv Gandhi had with Gorbachev. Prince Charles drew a similarity between the IRA activities in England and the terrorist menace all over the world and hoped that the traumatic experience undergone by India would not deflect it from the path of democracy. The Vice-President of the United States, Dan Quayle, compared their own tragic experience of the assassination of Kennedy brothers, John and Robert, with that of Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi and said, "I hope both of us have seen the last of it." The Prime Minister of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif, hoped that all problems between his country and India would be settled by peaceful negotiations and discussions. The Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Begum Khaleda Zia, thanked India for the assistance rendered during the devastating floods in her country. The leader of the Opposition in Bangladesh, Begum Hasina, recalled the help India had rendered to the liberation movement and to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, her late father.

Besides the representatives of governments and states, there were large numbers of callers including Congressmen and others to discuss the current turmoil during elections to Parliament, the choice of the new Congress leader, etc.

Kerala Chief Minister K. Karunakaran, one of the senior-most Congress leaders, met me and said as one of the elder Congressmen, I should help a smooth succession to Rajiv Gandhi in the party and discussed some options. I told him that, as a first step, the Working Committee of the Congress

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

should meet and elect an interim President and that the All India Congress Committee should be called within three months to endorse the decision of the Working Committee. I also advised that as soon as the new Parliament was constituted, the Congress Parliamentary Party should elect its leader by a ballot. This procedure, I said, was the most appropriate in the circumstances in which the party was placed. Both of us thought that since Rajiv Gandhi had already designated Narasimha Rao as the coordinator for election work and as he was the seniormost among the party functionaries, he was the most appropriate choice for interim presidentship of the organization. Karunakaran said that the general opinion in the organization was also the same.

For two days, unprecedented grief-stricken crowds passed by the body of Rajiv Gandhi. People from all corners of India came to pay their last respects. It looked as if the whole of India had turned up to have a glimpse of one whom they loved dearly. Seeing the uncontrollable masses that had gathered all along the programmed route, the funeral procession, with all state honours, started an hour earlier than the scheduled time. The visiting dignitaries were requested to take their seats at 3.30 p.m., half an hour before the commencement of the ceremonies. But the crowds held up the movement of the cortege and it could reach the site only at 4.30 p.m.

The sun was scorching and the mercury stood at 40° Celsius. There was no shamiana and many foreign dignitaries were in woollen clothes. It must have been a trying experience for them.

After religious ceremonies and chanting of verses, Rahul, who had returned to Delhi the previous day, lit the pyre and Rajiv Gandhi passed into history. We offered words of solace to Sonia and the children and returned to our own daily chores.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

A vibrant youth, with a smile adorning his charming face, pleasing manners, awareness of human problems, sharp intellect and broad sympathy for the weak and less privileged, Rajiv Gandhi was the darling of the masses. He was impatient with mediocrity and set his sights into the next century. He had an inherited flair for international affairs and soon made a mark in the councils of the world. His Five Continents and Six Nations move to ban nuclear devices and the Delhi Declaration with Soviet leader Gorbachev for a nuclear-free and non-violent world, lifted him to the front-line of world statesmen. He was heard with great respect in all international fora, such as the United Nations, the Commonwealth Heads of Government, the Non-Aligned Movement and the special sessions relating to the environment and disarmament.

His achievements on the national scene were no less spectacular. The Assamese accord which ended the confrontation with Assam students and led to a democratically elected government in that strife-torn state, his agreement with Longowal in Punjab which would have healed the wounds had not the other architect of the accord been assassinated, were truly creditable achievements.

Rajiv Gandhi came under a cloud of suspicion largely because of the inexperience of his advisers in parliamentary culture. Nehru used to attend Parliament invariably on all days during question hour and also for a few minutes during the day, off and on. Whenever there was some heated discussion, Nehru used to sit through those debates. As Congress Parliamentary Party Secretary in the first Lok Sabha, I had often gone to his room to apprise him of troubles brewing in the House. He would straightaway come to the House and deliver an oration which used to please all members. Had Rajiv Gandhi come to the House on the first day when there was a rumpus in Parliament over the report

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education, Bantalab, Jammu

of a private Swedish radio broadcast on the Bofors gun deal and accepted a parliamentary probe, he would have been saved all the subsequent tribulations. His statement in Parliament, based on the assurance given to him by the Swedish Prime Minister, Olof Palme, that no intermediaries were involved in the Bofors gun deal, stemmed from poor briefing by his advisers. How can an Indian Prime Minister assert that a foreign company had not engaged commission agents? He could only say that his government had not dealt with any intermediaries. As a result, Rajiv Gandhi, who started his career as "Mr Clean", suffered an eclipse. I use the word 'eclipse' advisedly because it was my view that like celestial eclipses, it would have been transient and would have passed off. Unfortunately, a life so full of promise was nipped in the bud by an assassin's self-immolating blast. The Nehru family has shed enough blood for the country. May it be spared further sacrifices.

On May 25, Dr. P.C. Alexander came for breakfast. As Principal Secretary to both Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi he was close to the family. He told me that the Congress was irked by my call for a national government as it expected to sweep the polls and come back with a thumping majority. I was not surprised at the exaggerated optimism of each of the political parties. I had contested elections to the Lok Sabha five times, of which I lost one and won the other four. In the election which I lost I was so full of hope that I even said that the rival candidate would forfeit his election deposit for failure to poll the minimum votes. Of all gambles, horse-racing or cards, the election gamble is perhaps the most elusive and no candidate has ever felt that he would be defeated. I told Alexander that in case the Congress got an absolute majority, the idea of a national government ceased to be relevant. If it did not, there could be no national government without the Congress which was the major

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

political party. I said I did not understand why the Congress felt worried at my suggestion. I added that my hunch was that even after the current elections there would be a 'hung' Parliament and I was anxious to tune the minds of parties in favour of a coalition or national government.

The Chinese Vice-Premier, during his call on May 25, paid tributes to Rajiv Gandhi for breaking the stalemate in Sino-Indian relations by making a visit to China in 1988 and reviving the dialogue between the two countries. He said that the Five Principles (Panchsheel) enunciated by Nehru to Zhou En-lai could serve as the basis of all discussions.

Newspapers and political parties continued to assail the floating proposals for cancelling elections, introducing presidential form of government, etc. One paper reported that Chandra Shekhar had suggested to me the imposition of internal emergency. I did not react or respond to all the gossip about my talks with party leaders. But I felt obliged to protect the Prime Minister against the slander in some newspapers that he had suggested to me the imposition of internal emergency.

Though not personally affected, as I was neither then nor ever going to be a candidate for any election, misrepresentation about the Prime Minister, who was facing election, had to be corrected. I therefore issued a denial, stating that the Prime Minister never mentioned the imposition of emergency during his talks with me.

Similarly, there was another report that the Prime Minister misled me that there would be a 'hung' Parliament and that it was because of that I talked about a national government. The Prime Minister never talked to me about a 'hung' Parliament. I issued a contradiction on this also to the Press.

During this period, every party wanted to lead a delegation to the President. My suspicion was that it was a ruse to get unpaid publicity for their party during election time. So

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

these delegations met me and even if they did not get relief, they nevertheless got publicity. In its representations, the Janata Dal objected to the countermanding of the poll in Patna while the Congress, BJP and J.D. (S) supported the Election Commission's action. The J.D. (S) objected to the countermanding of the poll in the Etawa constituency in Uttar Pradesh while the Janata Dal supported the Commission's decision. I heard all of them and said that the Election Commission was the final authority and that the President had no power or authority in much matters.

During all these charges and counter-charges, Chief Election Commissioner Seshan maintained an unnecessarily high profile, holding Press conferences every day, giving his views on all issues and hurting people by his brashness. He also committed an indiscretion in participating in a television programme on elections right in the midst of the raging controversies. I did not watch the programme as I was more interested in the finals of the French Open tennis championship. Next morning I heard the radio version of Seshan's statement. The morning papers splashed headlines that Seshan said that the government "dictated" the dates for the adjourned polls. The government promptly denied it and newspapers asked who was telling a lie — was it the government or the Chief Election Commissioner? With all the nervousness and anxiety about tranquillity following the assassination of a charismatic leader and with the experience of the orgy of violence after the assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984, the mood of almost all those present at the all-night meeting at Rashtrapati Bhavan had been for a sufficiently long postponement of the second and third round of polls. The logistics of deployment of security personnel in sensitive areas figured in the discussions and the dates were agreed upon by consensus. It was neither a directive of the government nor the exclusive decision of the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Election Commission. Had Seshan said that the postponement of the next round of elections was "necessitated" by the perception at that time of the law and order situation, he would have been impeccably correct. Despite the slips, Seshan was firm, strict, impartial and totally dedicated to the conduct of fair elections. A pot of milk is spoilt by a spot of filth. So was Seshan.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

38

Around the third week of May, Speaker Rabi Ray wrote to me requesting me to unveil portraits of Shyama Prasad Mukherji and Ram Manohar Lohia in the Central Hall of Parliament. As the dates suggested were close to the original date of final polling and counting of votes, I politely declined saying the dates did not suit me. Thereafter the elections were postponed.

On May 23, Advani met me and suggested that the portrait of Shyama Prasad Mookerji might be unveiled by me since the elections had been postponed. I replied that I would be glad to do so. Rabi Ray met me shortly thereafter and renewed his request for unveiling the two portraits on successive days. I told the Speaker that I did not want to monopolise all the functions and that I would prefer some other dignitary like the Prime Minister unveiling one of the portraits. I also mentioned that Advani had met me and asked me to unveil the portrait of Shyama Prasad Mookerji and that I had informally agreed as I had known him personally and was with him in the provisional and the first parliaments. So it was arranged with the Speaker that the Prime Minister would unveil Ram Manohar Lohia's portrait on May 29, and I would unveil the portrait of Shyama Prasad Mukherji on May 30, in the Central Hall of Parliament House.

Paying rich tributes to the departed leader, I said, "Dr. Mukherji was an eloquent speaker, a skilful debator, an able parliamentarian and a man of great moral courage. Quick-

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

witted and nimble in expression, he was devastating in his repartees .... When Nehru, Patel and Rajaji crossed swords with Dr. Mukherji, it was not sparks that emanated from the clash but glittering gems that rolled out of it." I praised Dr Mukherji's courage in condemning the British Government for its callous attitude to the famine which took a toll of millions of people in Bengal in 1943. As a freshman in Parliament in 1950, I had great admiration for Shyama Prasad Mukherji's talents and abilities.

My wife and I called on Sonia Gandhi early in June to console her and to enquire about her security needs. I said that the Prime Minister had assured me that every effort would be made to give the highest protection to the family and that she could unhesitatingly let me know the requirements. The few suggestions that Sonia Gandhi made were duly passed on to the Prime Minister for immediate action.

Faced with a critical balance of payments situation and the imminent danger of default of repayments, the Cabinet Secretary, at the instance of the Prime Minister, called on me during May 1991 and discussed steps for meeting the situation by borrowing foreign currency, offering gold as collateral. The Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, S. Venkitaramanan, explained to me details of this scheme. He said that it would be the 30 tonnes of confiscated gold in stock which would be pledged as security, not the gold held by the Reserve Bank to be used as backing for the currency. Further, the State Bank of India would borrow from the international market about $200 million for a short term of six months, offering 20 tonnes of gold as security. He said that during this period he hoped to obtain loans and accommodation from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other sources and thus redeem the pledged gold.

I had been a bitter critic of gold sales by the Janata

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

government when I was in the Opposition in 1977. At that time there was no compulsive reason for selling gold. But now a default in meeting obligations would have disastrous consequences for the country and the IMF would impose severe conditionalities for its loans and assistance. Besides, access to commercial borrowing in the international money market could become impossible and the loss of respect among Third World countries would be almost total. I felt that between the evil of defaulting and that of selling gold, the latter course was prudent and I concurred with the RBI Governor's suggestion.

The Finance Ministry struggled till the first week of June to manage the balance of payments and only thereafter resorted to the use of gold for securing a loan of $200 million. This naturally evoked harsh criticism and protest. Even former Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee, who has a good grasp of financial issues, came out bitterly against the sale.

On account of serious poll malpractices, the Election Commission had countermanded elections to five parliamentary constituencies and 15 Assembly constituencies. Besides, repolling had been ordered in as many as 1,500 polling booths all over the country. The affected persons and parties gave vent to their ire against the Election Commission.

A large number of men in public life who neither belonged to political parties nor contested elections had expressed distress at the electoral malpractices such as rigging, booth capturing, violence and intimidation. Most of them ended by saying that the President must do something to prevent abuses in the next two rounds of polling. A few groups met me and urged me to appeal to the people to eschew violence and malpractices in the elections. I told them that my appeal could have no greater sanctity than King Canute's command to the waves. However, I thought about

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

it later and came to the conclusion that even if my appeal failed to help orderly elections it could do no harm. Thus, on June 8, I prepared my speech and sent it to the Prime Minister for his comments and suggestions, if any. The Prime Minister toned down some expressions without disturbing the original thrust. I made the broadcast on June 8 on Doordarshan and All India Radio.

Referring to the widespread electoral malpractices I said, "A country ceases to be a democracy where the will of the people is not reflected in the elections and where the sacred right to vote is deprived either by a dictator or by muscle-men employed by unscrupulous politicians. All of us abhor theft and look down on a thief socially. Our conscience must therefore be aroused when muscle-men steal the fundamental rights of the citizens to exercise their choice. What the booth capturer does is essentially to rob his brothers and sisters of their inalienable right to vote. Parties that gain power through malpractices will not get the cooperation of the people. That a government which does not reflect the will of the people cannot last long, is one of the lessons of history.

"It is the solemn duty of political parties to ensure that polling is both free and fair. Since almost every political party speaks against electoral malpractices it should be easy for all political parties to abjure these methods by common consent. If everyone decides not to indulge in malpractices the objective will be automatically achieved. It is only when one party indulging in lawlessness wants to prevent the others from imitating them that clashes occur and mar the entire democratic process. Let the elections be fought with respect for human decency. Political parties, both ruling and in Opposition, bear an onerous responsibility for this. It is their duty to ensure that the voter exercises his free choice without fear of intimidation and violence. No words can be too strong to condemn the subversion of the peaceful election process."

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

The public and Press reactions were good. Most people felt that the appeal was timely. Of course, there were a few people who read a sinister motivation even in this transparently genuine address.

A few days after the tragic demise of Rajiv Gandhi I mooted the idea of awarding the Bharat Ratna to Rajiv Gandhi, to which Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar readily agreed. We decided to announce it after June 15, when all polls would have ended, lest it be interpreted as giving a boost to the Congress Party during elections. The Prime Minister told me some time later that it had been suggested to him that Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the architect of integration of princely India with the rest of the country, might also be awarded the Bharat Ratna. I readily agreed to the proposal. So, a Rashtrapati Bhavan communique dated June 17 announced the posthumous award of the Bharat Ratna to Rajiv Gandhi and Sardar Patel.

It was reported that members of the family of Sardar Patel were unhappy that they had not been consulted before the award was announced. It is the practice to consult the person concerned on the eve of the announcement of the Padma award so that it may be withheld if the awardee declines. In the case of posthumous Bharat Ratna awards, the next of kin is not consulted as they have no right to decline the honour the nation wants to confer. Only the Bharat Ratna awards are presented to nominees or the next of kin of the awardees. Other awards are sent by post to the absentees. In this case, Sonia Gandhi and Vipin Patel, grandson of Sardar Patel, agreed to receive the awards on behalf of Rajiv Gandhi and Sardar Patel respectively, at the investiture ceremony.

The last round of polling on June 15 was by and large peaceful except in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. None of the harsh warnings and threats of the Election Commission had any impact in Bihar.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Counting of votes commenced on June 16, and the initial results showed that the Congress was ahead of other parties. By the evening of June 17, however, it became apparent that no single party would secure an absolute majority in the Lok Sabha. The BJP was sprinting ahead in Uttar Pradesh and was poised to form the government in that state. Chandra Shekhar's party, the SJP, fared very badly and it looked that it might not have even half a dozen members.

Chandra Shekhar called on me at 10.30 a.m. and requested that he may be relieved from office as early as possible. I appreciated his sentiments and told him that I would try to expedite the formation of the new Ministry. I also advised him that the defeated Ministers should not function any longer. I understood that the Prime Minister issued instructions to the defeated Ministers not to deal with any files.

On June 18, the election results indicated that the Congress might not get a majority in the Lok Sabha but was likely to be the largest single party. Canvassing for election of the leader of the Congress Party in Parliament started. While P.V. Narasimha Rao, by virtue of his seniority, sobriety, competence and experience, was regarded as a natural choice, Arjun Singh and Sharad Pawar were also in the race. Tensions mounted. Several members of Parliament from all over India met me and informed me of the various moves and counter-moves by supporters of one or other of the candidates. Suddenly, Arjun Singh announced his withdrawal from the contest leaving only Sharad Pawar and Narasimha Rao in the field. The supporters of Sharad Pawar urged that the leader should be elected by secret ballot, while others wanted an uncontested choice on the basis of consensus. In parliamentary democracies, the leader is elected by the party members and it leaves no rancour or bitterness behind. Very often the defeated contestant for leadership is taken into the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Rantalab Jammu

Cabinet and they have functioned perfectly well. In India we resort to all kinds of devious methods and bargaining behind the scenes and make a show of unanimity. Narasimha Rao came out with a statement that it was for the party to decide whether the election of the leader should be by ballot or otherwise and that he would abide by it. This strengthened Rao's image with the members. Throughout the day hectic activities were going on, with lunches and dinners being given by supporters of the candidates in an effort to woo members.

Narasimha Rao had wisely called Dr. Alexander to help him during this period. Dr. Alexander, with his close and intimate understanding of the politics of the Congress organisation as Principal Secretary to Indira Gandhi and later to Rajiv, was able to assess the situation from time to time and keep Narasimha Rao posted with all the developments. Till the night of June 19, Sharad Pawar's group and Narasimha Rao's supporters were mobilising their strength for the contest. Narasimha Rao had an edge because 85 members from the southern states of Andhra, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu had decided to back him.

On the morning of June 20, Dr. Alexander telephoned and said the issue of leadership had been settled and that Sharad Pawar had withdrawn from the contest. He said that Narasimha Rao would be elected unanimously by the party in the afternoon. Shortly thereafter, Kamal Nath, M.P. from Madhya Pradesh, showed me a letter from Sharad Pawar in which he had stated that in the interest of the unity of the party he was withdrawing from the contest. He also appealed to Congress members to strengthen the party.

At 4 p.m. on June 20, the Congress Parliamentary Party met and unanimously elected Narasimha Rao as its leader amidst wild scenes of jubilation. At 6.20 p.m., the secretary of the party, Chandrashekhar Reddi, presented me a letter

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

intimating the fact of election of Narasimha Rao as leader. I asked Chandrashekhar Reddi to convey to Narasimha Rao that he could meet me at 7.30 p.m. I had established a convention that the largest party should be offered the first option of forming the government and if that party declined, other parties should be offered the chance successively according to their strength in the Lok Sabha. In 1989, when no party could obtain a clear majority I had offered the opportunity to form the government to Rajiv Gandhi as the leader of the largest single party in the Lok Sabha. When he declined the offer, I called the next largest party, the National Front headed by V.P. Singh. I had therefore no hesitation in calling immediately P.V. Narasimha Rao to form the government as he was the leader of the largest party in the Lok Sabha.

Narasimha Rao called on me at 7.30 p.m. and I offered him my warmest congratulations and wished him every success. Then I handed over to him a letter which read:

> "As the Leader of the Congress (I), the largest party in the Lok Sabha, I appoint you as the Prime Minister of India and invite you to form the Council of Ministers. I advise you to establish your majority in the Lok Sabha within four weeks."

I told Narasimha Rao that I would swear him in as Prime Minister the very next day and that he could take two or three days to finalise his Council of Ministers and that the Cabinet could be sworn in later, but Narasimha Rao preferred to have a part of the Cabinet sworn in along with him. I then suggested that he could have some 35 to 40 members in the first instance and expand the Ministry later according to the needs. Narasimha Rao wanted my suggestion for the post of Finance Minister in view of the acute foreign exchange crisis facing the country. He said that he would prefer one with some knowledge of the international financial institutions

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

and experience in dealing with them. I told him that in that case he would have to go outside the ranks of his party, and suggested two eminent names. The Prime Minister later chose Dr. Manmohan Singh with whose excellent work in the South Commission he was familiar.

Narasimha Rao then told me that he was handicapped by the defeat of Natwar Singh, Dinesh Singh and Romesh Bhandari to fill up the office of Minister for Foreign Affairs. I told him that he might himself retain the External Affairs Ministry and have an excellent deputy to assist him in routine administration. He mentioned to me a few more names proposed to be included in the Cabinet.

It was then decided that the Council of Ministers could be sworn in the next day at 12.30 p.m. Though the ceremony later was fixed for 12.50 p.m., the list of members was not received in my office till 12 noon. In the good old days of Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr. Rajendra Prasad and Dr. Radhakrishnan, the Prime Minister used to take the list of members of the Cabinet to the President personally. This practice was given up later. Sometimes the Prime Minister used to discuss the names with the President more out of personal relationship than as a matter of duty.

Finally, when the list arrived I was surprised to find 57 names, instead of the expected number of 35 to 40. It took an hour and thirty minutes to administer the oath to this large number. Some of the members of the Council of Ministers were not even informed in time. I was told that Mamata Banerjee, who was watching the live telecast, heard her name being called and then she rushed to the Ashoka Hall. Another Member of Parliament seated in the audience heard his name called and he rushed to take his oath much to the amusement of the audience.

Sharad Pawar, who was designated a Cabinet Minister, could not take his oath as he had not resigned from the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Maharashtra Cabinet. The Prime Minister received a very warm ovation from the audience. At tea after the ceremony, my secretary reported to me that some more Ministers-designate had turned up and asked whether they too could be sworn in. I told him the ceremony was over and that another function could be organised for their oath-taking. While chatting with Chandra Shekhar I told him that I had sworn in three Prime Ministers so far and hoped I had done it for the last time. Chandra Shekhar replied that I would have to swear in two more ministries before my term ended.

The allocation of portfolios was not an easy job and there was a great deal of wrangling over it. Finally the list of portfolios arrived at 8 p.m. the next day and the Rashtrapati Bhavan communique was immediately issued.

The Prime Minister called on me on June 24 at 12.30 p.m. and explained to me the critical balance of payments situation and wanted to know what could be done to tide over the situation. I told him that I was informed of the position even during the last days of the Chandra Shekhar government and had agreed to the pledge of gold to get over the immediate crisis. I said that an IMF loan with all its harsh conditionalities was inevitable and that Dr. Manmohan Singh, the new Finance Minister, was capable of handling the issue deftly. I suggested floating of dollar bearer bonds so that unaccounted foreign exchange could flow into the country. I explained that the bearer bond scheme which I pushed through as Finance Minister had netted Rs. 1,000 crores. I also advised the floating of gold bonds internally, repayable in gold after 10 years. Finally, I said that unless the deficit was curtailed and drastic measures adopted, the country would not recover.

On June 25, Dr. Manmohan Singh came to Rashtrapati Bhavan for breakfast. I have known him since the day I joined the Planning Commission in 1967. He was closely associated

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

with me when I was Finance Minister and had kept in touch with me when he became Secretary-General of the South Commission. The Finance Minister told me about the deficit, monthwise, in the balance of payments and expressed his inability to borrow from foreign commercial banks until the IMF was satisfied with India's ability to repay its obligations. He felt that bearer dollar bonds and gold bonds would not attract investment unless people were satisfied with India's capacity to repay. He thought that an IMF loan was imperative and had to be negotiated very quickly. He wanted to effect economies like cutting down subsidies drastically on fertilisers, food, petrol, etc. I told the Finance Minister that this would result in a hue and cry in and outside Parliament and that he should be sensitive to public opinion in this regard. He told me that it would be impossible to roll back prices within 100 days as put forward in the Congress election manifesto.

On June 26, Sharad Pawar was sworn in as Cabinet Minister. There were some rumours that he would be designated No. 2 in the Cabinet but Narasimha Rao clarified to me that there would be no ranking in the Cabinet and members would be placed in the list in alphabetical order.

By this time, the government was in real financial trouble. It could default any moment in meeting the foreign exchange obligations. The IMF was insisting on devaluation of the rupee as a condition for grant of accommodation. The Prime Minister, the Finance Minister and the Governor of Reserve Bank of India met me several times. I asserted that official devaluation of the rupee would create a storm of protest and threaten the government. Instead, the Reserve Bank which fixes the rate of exchange with reference to a basket of currencies could gradually readjust the exchange rate to suit the needs.

The RBI, instead of adjusting the rates progressively in

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

small doses, reduced the value of the rupee by 8.3 percent at one stroke and followed it up closely with another reduction by 11.3 percent to bring the rupee down from Rs. 21 to 25.6 a dollar. The Finance Minister explained to me that foreign exchange remittances were held back in the hope of a further drop in the rupee value and therefore they had to take these steps rapidly.

Dr. Manmohan Singh also formulated a scheme for bringing down the deficit by drastically cutting subsidies on food, fertiliser, petrol, etc. When I asked him about the quantum of savings on these, he said it could be as much as Rs. 8,000 crores in a full year. I told the Finance Minister that the proposal would create a furore in Parliament and in the public and lead to a blistering attack on the somewhat feeble government. Dr. Manmohan Singh said he had appreciated my suggestion for a national government to tide over the crisis as no single party even with an absolute majority in the Lok Sabha could face up to the harsh realities of the situation and put through stringent measures for economic recovery.

The Financial Express in its issue dated July 7, 1991, commented as follows:

"The President, Mr. R. Venkataraman, who had a deep insight into the economic crisis on hand had, therefore, rightly suggested at that time the formation of a national government. But the personal ambition of our political leaders had thwarted that course. If only there had been a national government at least for a year, India could have averted the present grave crisis and could have avoided going to the IMF at least for such a large loan."

While exporters were jubilant over the fall in the value of the rupee, importers felt the pinch of paying much more for their imports. The Oil and Natural Gas Commission had to incur an additional burden of Rs.1,000 crores and the debt servicing charges went up by another Rs.1,000 crores. The

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

government was faced with a critical financial situation and a hostile Parliament. I felt genuine sympathy for the Finance Minister who was valiantly struggling to keep the sinking economy afloat.

It may be recalled that when the Chandra Shekhar government wanted to hold elections in Punjab and Assam along with the rest of the country, I had requested reconsideration of the decision as I was convinced that in the face of reckless killings by the militants in Punjab, no free election was possible. On the reaffirmation of the decision by the Cabinet I adhered to Article 74 of the Constitution and issued the orders. The killings did not abate; worse still, they increased. It was reported that the militants had threatened to cut off the fingers of those who bore the mark of indelible ink signifying their having voted in the election. There was a massacre of a number of people travelling by train in Punjab and also of prospective candidates. Nevertheless, the election preparations were going on as Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar was bent on it. The Congress and the Left parties, on the other hand, were protesting against the elections and were keen on their postponement.

On June 20, the Election Commission presented me with the order constituting the Tenth Lok Sabha. It did not speak about Punjab elections and I was too busy following the political developments and formation of the Ministry. Narasimha Rao was appointed Prime Minister on the evening of June 20, and administered the oath of office on June 21. On the night of June 21, the Election Commission issued orders postponing the elections in Punjab to September 25, on the ground that the law and order situation did not permit a smooth and orderly poll in that State.

On June 22, General Malhotra, Governor of Punjab, called on me, protested against the postponement of elections and tendered his resignation. I told him that the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

President had no power to accept the resignation of a Governor without recommendation of the government and I would pass on his resignation to the Home Ministry. In the meanwhile, I asked him to function till a decision was taken. Later on he was relieved of his office.

The Congress was happy with the decision of postponement. The CPI(M) was not unhappy, but said that the President should have done it earlier though under the Constitution and the law, only the Election Commission had the power in this regard. The Janata Dal and the J.D. (S) were angry. I wish some scientist could devise a barometer to gauge public opinion!

After demitting office, Chandra Shekhar gave an interview in the first week of July in which he is reported to have stated that "Rashtrapati Bhavan went beyond its limitations, that much I can say. On many matters where Rashtrapati Bhavan could have kept itself aloof, they did not choose this rather cautious approach and got involved unnecessarily. However, I had no problem from them because everything that came from there, I accepted, it as I know that the country is in a crisis. I did not want to create another crisis."

At the usual morning meeting with my staff, they suggested that I should controvert this statement and bring out the various transactions that the Chandra Shekhar government wanted to put through, contrary to the norms to be observed by a caretaker Ministry. I not only declined but forbade any officer to speak on the subject to anyone. I said whatever activities of the caretaker government, which had been stopped were on record as precedents for future Presidents either to follow as good or avoid as bad. As far as I was concerned I had tried to set limits to the rights of a government merely carrying on the administration during an interregnum. I did not want to involve the office of the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

President in a debate on this issue. The Press tried hard to get at Rashtrapati Bhavan for its reactions but were unsuceessful. One paper said: "Rashtrapati Bhavan appears to have preferred to ignore the statement of the former Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar...." Reactions to Chandra Shekhar's criticism were wide and varied. Some supported his remarks while others rejected it. One columnist wrote, "However, political circles describe Mr. Chandra Shekhar's statement attacking the President as the pent-up feeling of a frustrated politician who was not allowed by the President to do as he pleased during his period as a caretaker Prime Minister. In fact, the President had firmly acted as the watchdog of the Constitution."

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

39

Narasimha Rao's government was assailed by those who had hoped for a berth in the Ministry and were disappointed. They came and complained that Madhya Pradesh, with only 14 members, had three Cabinet Ministers and a Minister of State; Andhra had seven Ministers; Tamil Nadu, where the Congress with its allies had secured 100 percent of the seats, had no Cabinet Minister and some regions were totally unrepresented. I replied that the Prime Minister had the difficult task of saving the country from economic chaos and ensuring political stability and that all right-minded persons should ensure the smooth functioning of the government before making demands. I also cautioned them that another election, in case the Narasimha Rao government fell, would plunge the country into chaos.

The government decided to summon the Lok Sabha on July 9 for the purpose of administering the oath to the members, electing a Speaker and taking a vote of confidence. The seniormost member of Parliament, Indrajit Gupta of the CPI, was sworn in as Speaker protem and the oath-taking of members was completed on July 9 and 10. Immediately thereafter the House proceeded to elect the Speaker.

The Congress (I) sought to bring about a consensus for the unanimous election of Shivraj Patil, Deputy Speaker in the previous Lok Sabha, as Speaker. It pleaded that by

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

convention the Speaker belonged to the ruling party and that Shivraj Patel had acquitted himself well as Deputy Speaker. The Janata Dal and the Left parties wanted to elect Rabi Ray, retiring Speaker, and refused to arrive at any compromise.

This placed a premium on the BJP votes. Whomsoever the BJP supported would be automatically elected. The BJP initially tried to secure the office for itself with the Janata Dal and its allies. However the Congress (I) gained the support of the BJP, which was the main Opposition party, by offering it the office of Deputy Speaker. Since the Congress and the BJP constituted an overwhelming majority in the House, the other parties did not propose Rabi Ray and Shivraj Patil was elected unanimously Speaker of the Tenth Lok Sabha. Shivraj Patil, who was my colleague in the Indira Gandhi government and was closely associated with me ever since, called on me the same evening and received my heartiest felicitations and blessings. Thus the minority government crossed the first hurdle.

In accordance with the Constitution the President addresses members of both Houses of Parliament at the commencement of the first session after each general election to the House of the People. I delivered the address on July 11. This was my third address prepared by three different governments in the last 19 months. On December 29, 1989, I delivered the address prepared by the V.P. Singh government; on February 21, 1991, the address drafted by the Chandra Shekhar government and on July 11, 1991, the speech prepared by the Narasimha Rao government. As usual I did not make any suggestions or alterations and read what was put forward as the policy and programme of the new government. The speech did not contain any diatribe against the previous governments but pleaded for cooperation in handling the difficult financial crisis. It promised early elections in Punjab and legislation to

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

maintain the status quo as on August 15, 1947, in all shrines except the Ayodhya temple. The presentation was sober and did not hurt anybody. It was well received.

On May 12, Prime Minister Narasimha Rao moved the customary one-line confidence motion in the Lok Sabha. The BJP declared that it would oppose the motion. If the National Front and the Left parties also joined the Opposition, Rao's Government would have been in jeopardy. But so scared were the members of another election within a few days of the last one that the National Front and the Left parties decided to abstain from voting, thereby ensuring the continuance of the minority government. The debate on the motion was on predictable lines but without many punches as the result was foregone. The debate was continued on July 15, after the weekend. Narasimha Rao's reply to the debate was sober and conciliatory. He declared that the ruling party would have consultations with other parties on all major issues facing the country and would seek to evolve a consensus to tackle them effectively. He assured the Left parties that the government would not yield to pressures of the International Monetary Fund nor take any decisions that would affect the nation. He defended the decision to readjust the exchange rates as otherwise India would have become a defaulter. At the end of the debate, the motion of confidence was carried by 241 votes in favour, and 111 against. The National Front and Left parties abstained. Thus the minority government of Rao crossed the second hurdle and established its legitimacy.

The river Cauvery has an emotional appeal to both the Tamil and the Karnataka people. It is one of the seven sacred rivers of India.

"Gange cha Yamune chaiva
Godvari Saraswati
Narmade Sindhu Cauvery
Jalesmin sannitham kuru"

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

runs the ancient Sanskrit verse.

During early history, when there were no dams across the Cauvery, floods used to devastate Thanjavur district. The Great Chola king Karikala (A.D. 190) is said to have built the Grand Anicut on the borders of the present Tiruchi and Thanjavur districts to stem the flood waters and divert the surplus into the river Coleroon. Since then the Chola territory of Thanjavur became the granary of Tamil Nadu. The Grand Anicut is considered to be a marvel of engineering.

In the first quarter of this century the Maharaja of Mysore, with the able assistance of engineer-statesman M. Visvesvarayya, built the Krishnaraja Sagar Dam near Mysore city and impounded the Cauvery waters. In 1924 an agreement for 50 years was entered into between the princely state of Mysore and the British province of Madras regarding the sharing of the Cauvery waters. The agreement provided for release of certain quantities of water for Tamil Nadu out of the inflow into the Krishnaraja Sagar. Thereafter the British built the Mettur dam lower down the river.

Mysore had a grievance that the superior British power had forced an unfair agreement on it as it was a dependent native state.

Claiming that the Cauvery agreement lapsed in 1974 the Karnataka government stopped releasing Cauvery waters except the surplus that flowed from Krishnaraja Sagar. It also built a number of dams on the tributaries of the Cauvery like the Kabini and the Hemavathy. A number of bilateral discussions were held between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu which only accentuated the bitterness without affording any solution. An inter-state river water commission was appointed in 1989 under the chairmanship of Justice Chittatosh Mukerji of the Bombay High Court.

Tamil Nadu pleaded for interim relief before the tribunal, but the plea was rejected on the ground that the tribunal had

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

no powers to afford interim relief. On appeal, the Supreme Court directed the tribunal to consider the issue of interim relief on merits. On June 25, 1991, the tribunal directed the Karnataka government to release to Tamil Nadu 205 tmc feet of water a year in a phased manner pending final decision by the tribunal on the shares of the two States. The Karnataka government rejected this interim order by passing unanimous resolutions in both the chambers of the legislature. The Tamil Nadu government for its part, by a unanimous resolution of the State Assembly, demanded immediate implementation of the interim award. It wanted the interim order to be gazetted by the Government of India and a directive issued to Karnataka to implement under Article 256 of the Constitution.

Each State called for a *bandh* and a counter-*bandh* and delegations from both states met the Prime Minister alternately without any result. During this period the Prime Minister did not meet me to seek my guidance, nor did I speak to him consistent with my policy to give advice only when it was sought.

On July 25, I saw a teleprinter message that the Karnataka Government had issued an ordinance against the implementation of the interim award of the Tribunal.

At 4 p.m. on July 25, the Prime Minister came, looking troubled, and reported to me about the Karnataka ordinance. He said while the Tamil Nadu government was insisting on the notification of the interim order, his law officers advised him that there was no precedent for it. He sought my views on the situation. I said that once an ordinance was issued, the Union Government could not decide whether it was valid or not and the best course would be to seek an advisory opinion from the Supreme Court on the validity of the ordinance and other connected matters. The Prime Minister was too disturbed in mind and was not responding to my

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

suggestions. I advised him to consult some eminent jurists outside his department to get a correct picture of the legal issues.

On July 26, both Karnataka and Tamil Nadu observed a total *bandh*. Both claimed that the *bandh* was a great success. How could it be otherwise when the *bandhs* were sponsored by the governments themselves? I wondered what message these *bandhs* convey except there is one more idle day.

On July 27, at 4.30 p.m., the Prime Minister came with a draft reference for advisory opinion under Article 143 of the Constitution from the Supreme Court. It contained two issues:

1. Whether the Karnataka ordinance was valid;
2. Whether it was obligatory for the Union Government to notify in the Gazette the interim award of the Tribunal.

I accepted the draft. Later in the evening Rangarajan Kumaramangalam, Minister of State for Law, brought me another draft in which a third item, namely, whether the Tribunal could issue an interim order, was added. The Supreme Court had earlier decided that it was within the competence of the Tribunal to adjudicate on the issue of interim relief and the Secretariat had not brought this to the notice of the Cabinet. However I did not want to raise the issue. I told the Minister that it was for the government to formulate the issues and I would accept whatever was proposed by it. I got the file at 10.30 p.m. and approved the reference immediately. Formal reference was made to the Supreme Court the next day, July 28.

The Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu thought the Centre was indulging in deliberate dilatory tactics by the reference to the Supreme Court and was greatly annoyed. The Union Minister of State for Labour, Vazhapadi K. Ramamurthi, also President of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee, who

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

happened to be in Madras, sharply criticised the Central Government for its failure to implement the interim award. The same evening the AIADMK members of Parliament met me and said the move to refer the matter to the Supreme Court was a ruse to delay implementation of the award. I told them that references under Article 143 were not like ordinary appeals before the Supreme Court and that I expected the matter to be dealt with expeditiously.

There was pandemonium in Parliament on July 29, when the leader of the Opposition demanded the resignation of Ramamurthi on the ground that the collective responsibility of the Cabinet had been violated by the Minister.

The government's plea that it had only seen newspaper reports and would have to get an authentic version of the statement was drowned in the uproar. I was hearing the 'noisy scene' from my study in Rashtrapati Bhavan. I was surprised that no one from the Treasury benches pointed out that it was the prerogative of the Prime Minister to decide whether he would dispense with a dissenting Minister or not. There were instances where the Prime Minister had not removed a Minister who had openly differed from the view of the Cabinet. For instance, when C. Subramaniam and O.V. Alagesan openly dissented from the Home Ministry circular regarding the use of Hindi and tendered their resignations from the Union Cabinet, Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri did not accept them. Nobody could compel the Prime Minister to remove a colleague except through a censure motion.

After the scenes in Parliament Minister Rangarajan Kumaramangalam rushed to me. I have been a friend of his family for three generations. His grandfather, Dr Subbaroyan, was in his heyday when I entered the political arena. We knew each other closely and I used to address him as 'uncle'. His son Mohan Kumaramangalam and I were in the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Bar together but more than that we worked in the trade union movement closely, though on opposite sides — he in the Communist Party and I in the Congress. We were however intimate friends.

I have been friend, philosopher and guide to Rangarajan in politics. Now Rangarajan in turn calls me 'uncle'. He said that he was in a great dilemma and needed advice. He explained that he was in agreement with Ramamurthi on the Cauvery issue and wanted to leave the government along with Ramamurthi. He also referred to the call given by the Chief Minister and AIADMK leader Jayalalitha to boycott two other Union Ministers from Tamil Nadu which he thought might alienate the people from him and affect his political future. I told Rangarajan that his reaction was premature and that he should await the arrival of Ramamurthi and ascertain the facts and the reactions of the Prime Minister before taking a decision.

At 6.15 p.m., a worried Prime Minister called on me and said that Ramamurthi had put him in grave embarrassment, that other Tamil Nadu members might follow him and that the AIADMK might withdraw support and endanger the government. I told him that Ramamurthi was arriving in Delhi later in the evening and he had sought an appointment with me. I said that during my long association with Ramamurthi I had found him a loyal Congressman who would not harm the organisation. He was also a man of conviction and would act according to his beliefs. The Prime Minister felt that Ramamurthi should not resign.

At 8.30 p.m., Ramamurthi came straight from the airport. He was calm, cheerful and unruffled. He confirmed the newspaper reports and said he stood by his statement. He said it was his duty to protect the interests of Tamil Nadu in the Cauvery waters dispute and also to demonstrate that the Congress was as much devoted to the protection of the rights

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

of the Tamils as any other party. He said that he was proceeding straight to the Prime Minister to hand over the letter of resignation. I did not try to dissuade him. It was a long time in Congress history since a Minister had resigned his office because of his convictions. Besides, the reputation of the Congress in Tamil Nadu as the champion of its rights would be maintained. When the Prime Minister consulted me again, I advised him to recommend acceptance of the resignation.

On July 30, when the matter was raised in the Lok Sabha, leader of the House Arjun Singh said Ramamurthi had resigned and that his resignation had been forwarded to the President. Ramamurthi made a statement in the House reiterating his criticism of the government on the Cauvery waters issue. He explained that he had resigned from the government because of his convictions. At the same time he pledged his support to the Congress (I) as a 'loyal soldier'.

Rangarajan called again and explained that if he did not resign he might lose popularity in his home state. I advised him to consult Ramamurthi and act accordingly. I told him that a token protest by Ramamurthi was enough and Rangarajan need not add to it. Ramamurthi advised him against resignation and precipitating matters. The Prime Minister also dissuaded Rangarajan from resigning on the issue.

While presenting the budget for 1991-1992, Finance Minister Manmohan Singh had proposed withdrawal of subsidies on fertiliser resulting in a saving of Rs. 2000 crores so that the deficit could be brought down to 6.5 percent of the G.D.P. as stipulated by the IMF. He also announced a grant of Rs. 100 crores spread over five years to the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation.

A blistering attack was launched on the Finance Minister's proposal to reduce the fertiliser subsidy and this threatened the government. The BJP announced that it

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education,Bantalab Jammu

would not only move a cut motion on this but demand a division at the time of voting. Congress members were also against the reduction of the fertiliser subsidy and there was an audible murmer from them.

The silent dissident group against the Prime Minister was not slow to seize the opportunity to rock the government. The Finance Minister was severely criticised at the Congress Parliamentary Party meeting. Manmohan Singh had always been of the view that the subsidies to rich farmers were causing distortions in the economy. Now under pressure to roll back the deficit, he had no option but to implement his undertaking to the IMF. There were rumours that if his scheme was not accepted by the party, he would resign.

The proposal of the Finance Minister to provide Rs 100 crores over a period of five years to the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation came under severe attack from the Opposition in Parliament and from sections of the public. Shortly after the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, a trust was formed and named "Rajiv Gandhi Foundation" with Sonia Gandhi as chair-person for life and Rahul, Priyanka, Vice-President Shankar Dayal Sharma, and a few others as trustees. The Opposition mounted a severe attack on the grant proposed in the Budget to the Foundation which they called a "family trust". The Opposition also threatened to force a vote on this item.

Rameshwar Thakur, Minister of State for Finance, saw me on August 1, and sought my advice as a former Finance Minister on these matters. I told him that the IMF assistance would be in jeopardy if the deficit was not reduced to the prescribed levels and that wholesale withdrawal of the budget proposals was not possible. At the same time, the small and marginal farmers could be accommodated by retaining the present subsidy for them and the Budget proposals maintained for others. I further said that I did not know the financial implications of such a measure and it was

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

for the Finance Ministry to study the feasibility of the suggestion.

As regards the grant to the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, I said, as Finance Minister, I would have provided for a token grant of Rs 100 and financed worthwhile schemes of national importance of the foundation on merit. There was no need for the foundation to get a government grant and it could easily manage with private philanthropy. But the chairperson, Sonia Gandhi, on her own, wrote a letter to the Prime Minister thanking the government for the generous gesture but declining to accept the grant proposed in the Budget. An announcement to this effect in the Lok Sabha nipped the controversy in the bud.

However, heated debates on the fertiliser subsidy continued in the party for three days. All efforts by the Finance Minister to explain the compulsions of the economy received scant attention. Though the scheme was approved by the Cabinet, the senior Ministers remained stoically silent leaving the Finance Minister to fend for himself. The Congress Party wanted to give relief not to the small farmers only but to 'all farmers,' a euphemism for rich farmers. Manmohan Singh had never in his life faced this kind of criticism.

At 7.15 p.m. on August 5, Manmohan Singh called on me with glistening eyes. He said that going back on the fertiliser subsidy would endanger the IMF loan and jeopardise his credibility. He felt that the government which could not put through agreed stipulations would not be trusted by the IMF to put through other conditions. He felt let down when none of his senior colleagues who had been party to the decisions defended the decision. He said that at 4 p.m. he had been to the Prime Minister and had tendered his resignation but the latter declined to accept it.

I fully realised the unenviable position in which the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Finance Minister was placed. A man of the highest intellectual integrity and absolute probity Manmohan Singh had never compromised on his convictions on any account. When I was Finance Minister I had refused firmly to increase the allocation for certain sectors in the Sixth Plan. Manmohan Singh told me later that he appreciated the firmness, though at that time "he was at the receiving end". Such a person could not be expected to withdraw his proposals completely. I had a feeling that a small group, not reconciled to Narasimha Rao's leadership, was exploiting the occasion to embarrass the Prime Minister. I told the Finance Minister that I would talk to the Prime Minister and revert to him. When I rang him up, the Prime Minister said he was coming to see me at 8.15 p.m. Then he told me that he was sorting out the differences in the party regarding the fertiliser subsidy. He said Man-mohan Singh had expressed his desire to resign and that he had refused to accept it. He thought that some concession should also be shown to the large farmers and that he proposed to cut the present subsidy of 40 percent to 30 percent. The Prime Minister requested me to convey the modified formula to the Finance Minister which I did. He replied that the revised rates would entail a loss of Rs 800 crores in the current year and Rs 1000 crores in the succeeding year and that it would upset his meticulously calculated restructuring scheme. I said that he need not commit himself for the future but could accept the rates for the current year. I told him that politics rested on innocuous compromises. Manmohan Singh replied that if it was my advice, he would accept it. I thanked him profusely as the government had been saved from what threatened to snowball into a grave crisis.

Towards the end of 1990 it was suggested to me by the External Affairs Ministry that I should pay a visit to Chile (South America) and participate in their National Day

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

celebrations in September 1991. They also felt that the tour might be combined with state visits to some other European countries.

Around March 1991, the External Affairs Ministry came back with a suggestion that Turkey and Italy could be included in the itinerary. I was sceptical of the advantages of visiting Turkey which had taken a stand against India on Kashmir and had also supported Pakistan's move to include it as an item in the Islamic Conference which was to meet in Turkey in August 1991. Further, India had supported Cypriots on the question of partition of their country. I thought our stand on these matters could be embarrassing both to the host and the guest.

On enquiring, the External Affairs Ministry said that after a visit by Rajiv Gandhi to Turkey and the return visit of Prime Minister Ozal, the relationship had improved considerably. The Prime Minister, whom I consulted, also confirmed the view and thereupon the programme for visits to Turkey, Italy and Chile was drawn up.

In July, 1991 the economic situation in the country worsened, the foreign exchange situation became precarious and India was struggling to secure the IMF loan. A President's entourage involves a large number of personal staff, security men, aircraft protection people, etc. A typical entourage consists of:

1. President's family — the President, the First Lady and two children.
2. Minister-in-waiting and his personal secretary.
3. Secretary to the President.
4. Military Secretary.
5. Medical Officer.
6. Doctor's Assistant.
7. ADCs.
8. Two personal security officers.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

9. Personal security officer for the First Lady.
10. Private Secretary to the President.
11. Private Secretary to the First Lady.
12. Baggage officer.
13. His assistant.
14. Attender of the President.
15. Attender of the First Lady.
16. Press Secretary.
17. The Rashtrapati Bhavan photographer.
18. Three TV & Films Division crew.
19. Laundry man.
20. Butler.

In addition there are about a dozen security staff and a number of aircraft security personnel.

I was not in the habit of taking with me members of Parliament or pressmen and had always relied on AIR and Doordarshan correspondents in the local or neighbouring areas of the visit.

However much I tried to reduce the numbers I could never succeed. I understood that the total cost of my visit to these countries could be around Rs 10 crores. So I spoke to the Prime Minister and expressed my deep distress over state visits to countries at a time when the nation was facing a grave financial crisis and suggested cancellation of the entire tour. The Prime Minister felt this might give a wrong signal about India's financial stability and said he would think it over and let me know.

During the heated controversy over the fertiliser subsidy and the struggle by the Finance Minister to curtail the deficit, I felt that the country should not engage itself in the extravaganza of state visits. I also wanted to set an example of austerity in expenditure. I rang up the Prime Minister and told him firmly that I had decided to cancel the visits abroad and insisted on his accepting my decision. I also cancelled my

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

annual sojourn in Hyderabad even though it was the last visit during my term. The Government of Chile expressed deep disappointment over the cancellation of the visit as it had made elaborate arrangements for receiving me during their National Day celebrations.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

40

Let me take you from the arid field of political turmoil to the green pastures of the Rashtrapati Bhavan Estate. The 350-acre estate sprawls over the Raisina Hills behind Rashtrapati Bhavan. From the main iron gate to the forecourt the brown-coloured path is girdled by well-manicured shrubs and flower beds. I wanted a good landscape artist to design both sides but most of them were overawed by the high profile task and by the possible criticism and declined to undertake it. In my view the sides needed much thicker foliage of evergreen plants but I could not get it through as every one was afraid of making any change in the design.

The Moghul Gardens, which is just behind the state rooms, is flanked by the South Garden and the North Garden. The South Garden faces the guest wing and has large and fine meadows in front. I had flower beds raised facing the sit out so that the guests sipping coffee from the verandah would have the pleasant sight of blooming flowers. Further down there is a nice golf course. I used to have a game regularly once or twice a week in the evenings on the course. This area has a large number of sturdy trees over fifty years old.

The North Garden faced the family quarters. There is a paved path of one kilometre in length leading to the North Avenue from the west gate of Rashtrapati Bhavan. I had palms and Ashoka planted alternately making it an attractive avenue. A large part of the ground there was

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

barren and I had it planted with four hundred saplings. I tried the experiment of growing coconuts and planted a hundred palms but they could not stand the Delhi winter. In the first winter, only 24 survived and in the second winter 20 more died. I am happy that at least four plants were still alive when I left.

Beyond the Moghul Gardens we have the kitchen garden and a number of mango, guava and many non-fruit bearing trees. I had hundreds of bananas planted and they responded splendidly and bore unusually large bunches of fruit.

I also revived the abandoned Deer Park and brought some deer from the zoo and a couple of albino deer. Unfortunately, the two species did not take to each other and the deers were found attacking the albinos. So I removed the albinos. I used to feed the baby deers with milk in a feeding bottle and they would take it after a little coaxing. I also put up a rabbit pen and took pleasure in feeding them. The rabbits are adorable and friendly pets.

Our cute little dog which used to come to our dining room every night to share a piece of bread or biscuit was so tiny that I was all the time afraid that someone might step on it. Unfortunately, it died and we were grief-stricken as if a member of the family had passed away. We buried the ashes in Deer Park and put a slab on it. One newspaper wrote that we had built a Taj Mahal for it. The President was always under watch.

Let us return to the political chores of the President. On August 12, the ambassador-designate of Swaziland (Africa) presented his credentials. Though the ceremony is a routine affair, something that the ambassador said needs to be recorded. Dealing with the economic situation in his country, he said that Swaziland ran into critical financial and foreign exchange difficulties and approached the IMF for assistance. The IMF stipulated stringent conditionalities such as devalu-

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

ation of the currency, liberalisation of imports, etc., and Swaziland did not proceed with the loan application. I was struck by his statement. Here was one of the least developed countries which declined to bow to IMF pressure while we, the developed among the developing countries, had accepted onerous conditionalities which I had denounced earlier in Fund-Bank meetings. When as Finance Minister I negotiated a loan of $5 billion from the IMF, we did not accept devaluation and other stringent conditions. But the deterioration of the economy since 1986 had placed India in such dire circumstances that we had no alternative but to swallow both our pride and the stipulations. Long after the ambassador left, the indignity we suffered kept coming back to me again and again.

In my Independence Day address I detailed the progress the country had made since Independence but tempered it by pointing out that "within the profile of progress the expression on India's face is not one of satisfaction. The sharp contrast between India's haves and have-nots, the rich urbanites and the slum dwellers, the employed and the jobless, the sheltered child and the street child" was a matter of deep regret. "Swaraj has meant little to the deprived and unprivileged," I added. I lamented the disconcerting rise in population which diluted if not nullified the progress the country was making and called for a national plan of action for stabilizing the population. Giving the instance of Kerala, where a higher literacy synchronised with lower population growth, I urged the government to implement the Directive Principle of State Policy on compulsory primary education to all children of school-going age.

I appealed to the people to adopt a national perspective and eschew confrontations between labour and management, landowner and cultivator, producer and consumer and work together for the common cause of strengthening

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

the nation.

In the end I pleaded for austerity in public expenditure to tide over the looming economic crisis. I had done my last Independence Day broadcast as I would be demitting office before the next Independence Day.

Early in September 1991, Buta Singh, former Home Minister and a Scheduled Caste leader, rang up my office and asked for an appointment with the President for bringing a delegation of sixty Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe members of Parliament to present a memorandum on the atrocities committed on SC/ST people all over India and more particularly in Andhra Pradesh. A stickler for dignity and decorum in Rashtrapati Bhavan, I had always resisted its use for demonstrations. Very often Boat Club demonstrators used to barge into Rashtrapati Bhavan demanding an audience with the President. On all these occasions I had strictly followed the practice of receiving a representative group of about a dozen people. Rashtrapati Bhavan used to advise the deputationists either to send a representative group of a dozen people or leave the memorandum at the reception office. My Joint Secretary informed Buta Singh that the President would be glad to meet a representative deputation of a dozen persons. Buta Singh reacted sharply and said that he insisted on all the 60 members calling on the President. When my Joint Secretary reported this to me, I felt any relaxation of the practice in one case would lead to practically throwing open Rashtrapati Bhavan for demonstrations by other groups and so I said I was not going to change the system.

Later I received a letter from Arvind Netam, member of Parliament, stating that the group had pondered over the suggestion of the President to limit the number of deputationists to ten and had rejected it and that members proposed to march to Rashtrapati Bhavan. I replied

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Ramtalab Jammu

personally to Netam that the matters which the delegation wanted to raise were within the purview of the government and the President merely forwarded these representations to the Prime Minister or the government. As such whether one or a dozen met the President was of no great significance. I hoped that no disharmony would be created over this small matter.

Buta Singh wrote to me that the group had great respect for the office of the President and did not want to create any "disharmony". He informed me that while the entire group would march to Rashtrapati Bhavan, only a small number would meet the President. A reply was sent deeply appreciating his response and asking for the names of members chosen to meet the President so that the officers could escort them to the President's room.

On the morning of September 13, to my surprise it was reported that more than a hundred Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe members marched to Rashtrapati Bhavan and insisted on an audience with the President. I did not know what exactly happened at the Reception. *The Times of India*, dated September 14, reported as follows:

"The forum members were agitated with stalwarts among them, particularly Mr. Arvind Netam, for having taken the lead of writing directly to Mr. R. Venkataraman giving a list of a small group of 10 MPs who would meet him and submit their memorandum. Some of them were upset that the forum had not been consulted in this regard and they could not be a party to the decision taken unilaterally by a few." The forum members, after some discussion among themselves, marched out of Rashtrapati Bhavan. Nevertheless Buta Singh handed over a memorandum to my secretary, Murari, which I despatched to the Prime Minister for necessary action. The members thereafter created noisy scenes in both Houses of Parliament but the presiding officers

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

firmly ruled out any discussion about the President.

What shocked me was the assertion that anyone, a member of Parliament or otherwise, has a right of audience with the President. Audience is a privilege conferred by the head of state and is not an enforcible right against him. I firmly established this though at the cost of personal popularity. I wonder if anywhere in the world anyone had asserted a right of audience with the head of state. Who can deny that India is a vibrant democracy!

Amidst a great deal of pomp and ceremony the 37th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference met on September 23, in the Central Hall of Parliament. This was the third time that India hosted the conference, the last one being held in 1975. The conference was attended by 109 members of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

In my inaugural address I explained the rather unusual features of the Association in the following words:

"The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association is a unique institution. It has not just a shared past but a common present and a prospect of future togetherness. This mutuality is not regulated by any agreements or treaties and its resolution and decisions are not binding on any one. It is an association of independent nations which knows that they are free to express their views and opinions on matters which are brought before them by common agreement. It is left to each individual country to take advantage of the variations adopted to the parliamentary model and to absorb such of them as suit their genius. It is this characteristic of the C.P.A. which has made it last so long and will enable it to last in the future also."

Referring to the merits of parliamentary democracy over other forms I said:

"If worked properly and honestly there is perhaps no better substitute for representative parliamentary demo-

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

cracy. With all its deficiencies it is still superior to all other systems that human ingenuity has so far been able to devise."

I said that parliamentary democracy would become a mockery unless certain norms were observed. "To speak and let others speak, to hear and let others hear, to propose and let others oppose and to argue vehemently but accommodate ultimately is the pith and substance of parliamentary process."

I concluded by saying:

"I happen to be one of those who attended one of the earliest Commonwealth Parliamentary Conferences — the conference held in New Zealand in 1950. During the customary tour of the host country our group of parliamentarians were taken to the Glowworms Cave. We were warned that the glowworms were sensitive to noise and would not glow if there was any. So all of us held our breath and became dead silent. Imagine parliamentarians not from one country but from a bunch of the Commonwealth countries remaining quiet even for a brief second. But we did. Then we saw millions of diamonds sparkling on the roof of the cave — a sight of unparalleled charm and beauty that has lingered in my mind ever since. Later during our speeches the Canadian delegate said he would like to borrow the glowworms and present them to the Speaker to enable him to keep order in the House. Addressing the group later I said I would like to borrow the glowworms for a different purpose. I said the glowworms had a unique capacity for shedding light without heat and that was what I would like any Parliament to learn."

This story, like the one on Romeo and Juliet I narrated at the Guildhall, London, received rapturous applause.

It was customary in our household for all members of the family to have dinner together, where domestic and personal matters were discussed. We did not meet anywhere or at any

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

other time of the day. On the night of July 25, 1991, exactly a year before the expiry of my term, I announced to the family that I was retiring at the end of one year and that all post-retirement arrangements might be taken in hand. To a question where I would stay after retirement I said that I would decide by January 1, 1992, whether I would stay in Madras or Delhi.

The first and major task was to dispose of the large collection of books, articles and souvenirs collected over a period of 12 years since I became Finance Minister in Delhi in January 1980.

I had the books classified under different languages. I earmarked over 100 Sanskrit books for presenting to the C.P. Ramaswami Iyer Foundation at Madras, which was carrying on research in scriptures, about 300 Hindi books to the Hindi Prachar Sabha at Madras, a number of Tamil books to the Delhi Tamil Sangam, Delhi, and quite a few English books to the Meenakshi College for Women, Madras. These were despatched to the institutions later.

Under the *toshakhana* rules, Ministers are entitled to retain gifts and souvenirs below Rs 3,000 in value and those above this amount had to be surrendered to the *toshakhana*. The Vice-President and the President are, however, entitled to retain the gifts irrespective of value. I had all the gifts received during my tours and otherwise stored in a separate room so that they could be housed in a museum and permanent exhibition which I decided to establish in Rashtrapati Bhavan. I now had them classified into major and minor items in silver, ceramic, glass, wood, etc. I gifted all the minor silver items to Bala Mandir, an orphanage in Madras. I was told that these items fetched Rs 17,500, which the management had put in a special account for financing the marriage of orphan girls. I made out a list of all the major gift items to be transferred to the Rashtrapati Bhavan Museum which I

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

had been trying to establish since the last four years.

When I asked my staff about the various art objects of the earlier Presidents, I was told that they were kept in a store-room. There was no inventory of the articles, no verification of the stock and no maintenance of any of these things. I immediately initiated action to retrieve the valuable pieces and recondition them for exhibition in the new museum. There were two marble statues of King George V and Queen Mary of exquisite workmanship which were left exposed to wind and weather on the verandah of one of the rooms in Rashtrapati Bhavan. They each weighed three tonnes and were also found disfigured by bird droppings over several years. Despite several attempts to clean and restore them, telltale marks of bird droppings refused to yield. With the help of defence departmental cranes I brought them down and installed them in the marble room on the ground floor. The marble room contains several paintings of rare value of Royalty as well as the Viceroys of India. I had this room redone, and installed a few busts, thanks to the generous help rendered by the British High Commission. The museum was set up in the room opposite the Durbar Hall and the *toshakhana* on the ground floor. The Central PWD, the Keeper of Arts, Rashtrapati Bhavan, the Director of the National Museum, and a host of other experts worked day and night to complete the museum by October, 1991. My secretary Murari and his wife Sita, herself a connoisseur of art, worked ceaselessly identifying all items for the exhibition.

I made a list of all valuable items and transferred them to the museum and *toshakhana*. The mementos from most of the foreign heads of state and from within India numbering hundreds were handed over to the museum and *toshakhana*. The rest were retained in the storeroom for distribution to the staff in Rashtrapati Bhavan at the time of our departure. We retained for ourselves a small number of items more for

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

remembrance than for their value.

On October 24, I inaugurated the museum and *toshakhana*. The exhibition consists of three parts. The museum on the first floor opposite the Darbar Hall, the *toshakhana* on the ground floor and the Marble Room across the *toshakhana*. In the museum, gifts to several Presidents were aesthetically arranged. The silver chair weighing 640 kg used by Emperor George V at the Durbar in 1911-12; engravings and etchings by Emily Eden; the painting of the bathing ghat of Varanasi by William Daniell and miniatures of Indian armymen in their resplendent colours by William Luker, were some of the main attractions. In the *toshakhana*, a boat made of cloves presented by Indonesia to President Rajendra Prasad and other gifts like silverware, cut glasses, delicate porcelain, ivory and lacquer works, numbering over 150, were on display. The marble room was adorned with paintings of British royalty and Viceroys, which were masterpieces in oil.

I wrote in the visitors book, "I am happy that some of the valuable gifts of Rashtrapati Bhavan, which were consigned to the lumber room, have been retrieved and made into a delightful museum. I am sure further additions will enhance the value of the museum and preserve for the posterity the treasures of India."

On the afternoon of October 4, an urgent file came to me recommending the grant of the rank of Air Chief Marshal to the late Subroto Mukherji, former Chief of the Air Staff. It was supported by the Chief of the Air Staff, the Defence Minister and the Prime Minister. Subroto Mukherji was an outstanding Chief of the Air Staff who died during an official visit to Japan. Several memorials had been raised for him including the Subroto Park. His wife Sarada Mukherji was appointed Governor of Gujarat and she acquitted herself creditably.

Notwithstanding my regard for this distinguished

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Ranbirpora Jammu

officer, I felt disturbed by the recommendation. First, there was no precedent for the grant of the rank of Field Marshal or Air Chief Marshal posthumously. Ranks had been conferred on very select number of retired Chiefs of Staff during their lifetime. Secondly, it would lead to a research into history to dig out others for similar grants. Thirdly, ranks like Field Marshal and Air Chief Marshal are not titles or awards like Bharat Ratna. So I returned the file for reconsideration by the government. It was unfortunate that the Chief of the Air Staff had informed Mrs Mukherji and even arranged for her presence at the Air Force Day on October 8, before clearance of the proposal.

The file did not come back to me.

Early in October, a file recommending the appointment of Roxana Subramaniam Swamy as Additional Judge of the Delhi High Court came to me with the recommendation of all the constitutional authorities. Mrs Swamy had completed ten years and four months at the bar, just a few months more than the minimum qualification fixed under the Constitution. Her income was stated to be Rs 20,000 per annum during 1989 and 1990. There were a number of women lawyers in the Delhi High Court with greater standing and with far greater income from the profession. To overlook all of them and appoint a person with Mrs Swamy's standing and practice would have been an affront to the bar. I therefore returned the file to the Prime Minister for reconsideration. Dr. Subramaniam Swamy mounted a tirade against me in the Central Hall of Parliament and outside which I ignored. I had never been either pressured or cajoled to act against my conviction.

The *Dussehra* synchronises with a festival known as *Kolu* (the festival of dolls) in Tamil Nadu and every house arranges dolls in an attractive manner and invites ladies to participate in the function. Young girls take great delight in

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

visiting other homes and displaying their musical skills as also their rich clothes and ornaments.

The First Lady organised the festival of dolls in Rashtrapati Bhavan on October 13, and invited all the VIP ladies of Delhi. The wives of the Vice-President, Cabinet Ministers, women ministers and a host of social workers were there. According to tradition, they were asked to sing amidst hilarious conversation and peals of laughter. Some of the fine bronze idols which we had and a lot of clay and papier-mâché idols we had preserved, were all tastefully decorated and displayed inviting many questions about them. The reception which lasted three hours was full of mirth, music and flowers. We had carried a Tamil Nadu tradition into the Ashoka Hall.

I undertook a visit to the north-eastern frontier district of Kameng in Arunachal Pradesh to meet and cheer the valiant *jawans* living in difficult clime and terrain. This frontier occupies a strategic position in the country's defence and encompasses high mountains of over 15,000 feet. Addressing the troops at Tawang, I complimented them on their courage and valour and the cheerful manner they faced the hostile weather and terrain. I praised the *jawans* and officers who had made supreme sacrifices during the Sino-Indian conflict in 1962 in this area in defence of the motherland.

I said that though India sought friendship with all its neighbours it still had to maintain the highest standards of vigil to prevent any misadventure by others. After the speech I met the *jawans* and shook hands with them. I also visited the ancient monastery of Tawang, said to be more than 300 years old, which was being renovated.

In one of my weekly group interviews for the public on October 12, a group of children, 6 to 8 years of age, greeted

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

me. After greeting them and exchanging pleasantries, as I tried to pass them, one child said that the group wanted to talk to me. The children were from the Springdale Junior School and were accompanied by their teachers but they did not speak or prompt the children. One child asked, "How is it that you are always smiling and cheerful?"

"I work hard, I am happy. It is only when you are lazy you will be morose," I replied.

"How often do you meet your children?" the child asked.

"I have very little time for the family as I have a very tight schedule. I get up at six in the morning and go to bed at 11 in the night."

"What should we do to make every child happy?"

"Work hard. Be honest and sincere. Love your country and always do your duty."

"What are your hobbies?"

"I played games like badminton, football and cricket in my younger days but I now play badminton, golf and billiards. I am a keen photographer and even now take pictures. I collected stamps but gave them away."

I complimented them on their intelligence and enterprise. I said I had never given an interview to anyone about myself but "you tiny tots have extracted one from me. I wish you all luck." The children were overjoyed.

It may be recalled that I had appointed Justice Balakrishnan Eradi, retired Judge of the Supreme Court, to look into the unseemly incidents on November 21, 1991, at the time of the swearing-in of ministers. Justice Eradi submitted his report on October 30. The report stated: "The responsibility for creating disturbance inside the Ashoka Hall must rest squarely on the media persons." It further observed: "Even if they had been subjected to any unfair, unjust or humiliating treatment by any of the officials of Rashtrapati Bhavan or by

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

a member of the security staff, they should never have forsaken discipline and decorum and created disturbances particularly in the august presence of the President of India." The judge also considered such conduct was not expected from any responsible citizen, much less from the members of the Fourth Estate.

The commission had further found unacceptable the charge that the security men on the forecourt of Rashtrapati Bhavan had assaulted media persons with *lathis*. It may be noted that some papers had written that "media persons were belaboured by the security staff."

It has become a national habit not to accept any determination of an issue by an adjudicating authority, whether it be water dispute, industrial dispute, religious dispute or a personal dispute. The Delhi Union of Journalists was no exception to the rule. For my part I treated the chapter as closed.

On November 5, the customary *Diwali* greetings were offered by the families of the staff of Rashtrapati Bhavan, cultural organisations and the public. The Vice-President, the Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers and the elite called on us and wished us all happiness and prosperity. As this was our last *Diwali* in Rashtrapati Bhavan, we decided to celebrate it with children from the orphanages. We invited about 100 orphans and gave them crackers, sparklers, rockets and fireworks. We served them sweets and snacks. Their mirth, joy and laughter and little pranks lifted us to the seventh heaven of happiness. They clung to me, each tugging at me to help, either light a cracker or a rocket which they were afraid to do. They also sang and danced in sheer delight. This was one of the memorable evenings in Rashtrapati Bhavan.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

I had earlier dealt with the 52nd Amendment to the Constitution, popularly called the Anti-Defection Law. Even when the Bill, as passed by Parliament, was submitted to me for assent, I had expressed my misgivings regarding non-compliance with Clause (2) of Article 368 (which requires ratification by 50 percent of the States in specified cases). I was assured that the Attorney-General had approved the submission of the Bill to the President and it could be accepted.

A number of cases arose not only in Parliament but in many state legislatures where the Speakers had acted without observing the principles of natural justice. Several cases were filed and were pending in High Courts and in the Supreme Court. Deeply disturbed by these events I had written to Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar on January 2, 1991, to take appropriate legislative action to rectify the situation. Newspapers reported that the Law Minister minuted, "Ignore it." Even then the letter somehow found its way to a newspaper which commented that the President was interfering in the affairs of the government.

On November 11, the Supreme Court delivered an epoch-making verdict on the anti-defection law. It held that the 52nd amendment was valid in law, but paragraph 7 of the amendment which barred the jurisdiction of courts in respect of the decision of the Speaker on disqualification of members, was void for want of ratification by 50 percent of the states as required under Article 368 of the Constitution.

The decision was hailed by the nation as a whole as it upheld the principle of disqualifying a defector from membership of the legislature and at the same time afforded an opportunity for appeal against unsustainable decisions of the Speakers.

There were still differences on the question whether an appeal should be made to a court or to some other forum as

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

the presiding officers were keen to protect their immunity from intervention by courts.

On November 22, we celebrated the First Lady's birthday by inviting over a hundred spastic, retarded, blind and handicapped children and also a group of street children who do odd jobs, earn a little money and lead a vagrant life. The social service organisations dealing with these children had done their best to alleviate their distress and to give them rudimentary education.

Though handicapped, they displayed extraordinary skill. The street children executed a rock and roll dance, the handicapped showed us paintings done with their toes or teeth holding the brush, the blind played musical instruments. They were proud to be received in the Moghul Gardens, and given VIP treatment with sweets, snacks and handshakes.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

41

On the Presidential reference made by me on July 28, the Supreme Court gave the following opinion:

(1) The Karnataka Ordinance later converted into an Act nullifying the interim award of the Cauvery Tribunal is unconstitutional and void.

(2) The River Water Disputes Tribunal had jurisdiction to pass an interim award if a specific reference was made by the order appointing the tribunal.

(3) The interim award was a report in terms of the relevant statute and the Central government was bound to notify it in the Gazette.

V.C. Shukla, Minister for Water Resources Development, announced on November 25 in Parliament that the government had accepted the advisory opinion of the Supreme Court.

One of the new developments in Indian democracy is to take adverse decisions by whatever authority promulgating it to the streets with agitation, *hartal, bandh* and violence, disrupting the even flow of life. It is regrettable that the states, which have the responsibility for the maintenance of law and order and the preservation of peace and normal life, have taken to this kind of agitation.

Pressures started mounting from Karnataka and Tamil Nadu and delegations of legislators from both the states led by their Chief Ministers laid siege to the Prime Minister's Office. On December 12, the Government of India issued the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

notification of the interim award of the tribunal. Unprecedented incidents of assault, arson, and looting started in Bangalore city against the local Tamil population. There were also demonstrations and condemnation in Tamil Nadu against the violence let loose in Bangalore.

On December 1, I inaugurated amidst pomp and ceremony the 125th year celebrations of the Allahabad High Court which is one of the oldest High Courts in India. I gave some wholesome ideas to the bar and the bench so that people's faith in the judicial system might not be eroded. I said the bench and the bar shared a great responsibility to ensure that political justice was not denied to the citizen. Any attempt to deprive the voter of his right of free choice of his representative by intimidation, violence or booth-capturing was a crime against fellow citizens, I asserted.

Adverting to the mounting arrears in the higher judiciary, I pointed out that though litigation had swelled beyond all calculations as people had become aware of their rights, it would ease the burden on courts if they were selective in entertaining cases where other remedies were available. The tendency to bypass the established hierarchy for redress of grievances and approach the highest courts through writ petitions had to be curbed, I said. Likewise, the temptation to clutch at jurisdiction and expand the scope of judicial review should be resisted by the judiciary. I cited the example of the salutary rule observed by the United Nations Administrative Tribunal of which I was the President for 12 years, that it would not substitute its judgement for that of the executive and would interfere only where the decision of the executive was vitiated by prejudice, extraneous considerations or fundamental error of procedure.

In my view, mere increase in the strength of courts without reform of procedures would not solve the problem of

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

mounting arrears. I requested the judges to consider whether it was necessary to have a chain of appellate courts as it only encouraged the litigants' tendency to gamble. The rule of natural justice required one appeal over an order and not appeal to a succession of courts. I also appealed to the bar to cooperate in the expeditious disposal of cases by avoiding lengthy presentations.

I bemoaned the tendency to rush through legislation without proper scrutiny by the legislatures and asked the governments to circulate important bills for eliciting public opinion so that the bar and the public might have the time to study them and make suggestions. The Chief Justice of India, K.N. Singh, told me later that I had not conformed to the usual pattern of address on such occasions but had provided some food for thought for the bench and the bar.

Back in 1955, I was elected a member of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal by the United Nations General Assembly. The Tribunal hears disputes between the staff and the United Nations on matters relating to non-observance of the contract of service and the rules and regulations relating to service conditions. The Tribunal consists of seven members from all parts of the globe elected for a three-year term. The members elect a President and two Vice-Presidents from among themselves. I was a member of the Tribunal from 1955 to 1979, and its President from 1968 to 1979. I had rendered several important judgments during those 25 years. My colleague, Madam Suzanne Baslid of France, an authority on international civil service law and practice, was President from 1952 to 1968.

The United Nations Administrative Tribunal, in a rare gesture of appreciation of the work done by both of us, took a decision to designate us as Honorary Presidents of the Tribunal for life. The letter from its President, Ackerman, said, "This decision reflects the esteem and admiration of the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

members of the Tribunal for your contribution to its work and it also signals our deep appreciation of the honour and distinction with which you had served the United Nations and the principles of justice."

After Chinese Premier Zhou En-lai's visit to India in 1960, there had been no exchange of visits between China and India for 31 years. The Chinese incursion into India in 1962 had created unparalleled bitterness between the two countries and the wounds of 1962 had not yet healed completely. After Rajiv Gandhi became Prime Minister, certain moves were initiated for normalising relations with China. He was flooded with conflicting advice, one urging him to visit China and the other objecting to it. Rajiv Gandhi mentioned to me both points of view and said he was undecided. I told him that the country's interest and not sentiment should guide his decision. I added if the USA could forget the ignominy of Pearl Harbour and if Japan could swallow the horrors of the atomic blast in Hiroshima, India need not go on ruminating on the 1962 events and that an honourable settlement was in the interest of China and India.

Rajiv Gandhi's visit to China in 1988 helped bring about a thaw in the frozen relations between the two countries and Chinese Premier Li Peng accepted Rajiv Gandhi's invitation to visit India. It was against this background that Li Peng visited India between December 12 and 16. He was invited to stay in Rashtrapati Bhavan and accorded all courtesies that are extended to a head of state. For security reasons, all his meetings were held in Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Tibetan refugees organised a demonstration against the Chinese Premier and they were arrested. Some aggressive demonstrators who wanted to break the police cordon were repulsed by force. A hue and cry was raised against these actions and the government reacted defensively. The

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Supreme Court also ordered release of the arrested persons, treating the demonstration as an inherent right to protest.

No one had either the knowledge or the wit to recall that the Tibetan refugees were accommodated in India with the specific condition that they should not indulge in any political activity. When Narasimha Rao called on me later I asked him why no one had pointed out in Parliament the violation of the condition by the Tibetan refugees. He said both the Communist Party of India and the Congress had overlooked this aspect.

My talks with Li Peng were very cordial. We talked about bilateral cooperation in trade, industry, science and technology and culture and did not advert to the border issue. With the Soviet Union's transmutation into a Commonwealth of Independent States, it has ceased to be a super power and China is the next large power left in the globe. Naturally it wants to consolidate and build itself for a bigger role.

For the first time Rashtrapati Bhavan organised a lunch in the Moghul Gardens for the Chinese delegation. The typical colourful Indian *shamiana* with Indian music in the background instead of the traditional President's band made it very attractive. We had also prepared some Chinese dishes which Li Peng said were the best he had had outside China. When he had a second helping to prove his statement, Madame Zhu Lin, who was sitting on my right, said that her husband had a good appetite. "That means," I said, "he works hard." Madam Zhu Lin was articulate and well-informed. She plied me with questions regarding the number of atomic power plants that we had, the per capita food production and crude oil production in the country. She said that she loved Indian music and I promised to send her next morning a box of vocal and instrumental music tapes. She then took my menu card and wrote something in Chinese and handed it to me. The message ran as follows: "May Your

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Excellency Mr President, enjoy good health and every success. Madame Zhu Lin, December 12, 1991." During the two hours at the lunch table the Chinese Prime Minister was totally relaxed and spoke very warmly and pleasantly to everyone. Watching the bonhomie at the lunch, one would never have suspected that there had been an interlude of bitter discord between our two countries.

On December 14, we organised a cultural show for the guests at Rashtrapati Bhavan where Kathak and Bharata-natyam dancers gave a scintillating performance. Li Peng who was sitting by my side was so absorbed that he seldom spoke to anyone. He warmly cheered the artistes after each piece. When it was over, Li Peng told me that the show was fascinating and he enjoyed it immensely. I took formal leave of the Chinese Premier and his wife, as under protocol the ceremonial farewell was to be accorded by the Prime Minister. Li Peng repeated his invitation to me to visit China early.

When Narasimha Rao and I reviewed the outcome of this important visit, we felt that it was fruitful. Though it did not immediately tackle the only sore point in our relationship, namely, the border issue, it created a friendly and favourable climate for talks, discussions and mutual accommodation. I suggested that as a first step we could freeze the existing position on the entire border and demilitarise the area pending a final determination and that negotiations might be started at the official level on the delineation of the border. Narasimha Rao said that even on the situation on the ground, there were some differences but these could be sorted out. He was of the view that the Chinese themselves might not be averse to talks on this basis.

At the conclusion of the National Development Council meeting in the last week of December, the Prime Minister

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

issued an appeal for austerity in the administration in view of the continuing fiscal crisis. A reduction of 10 per cent in administrative expenditure and cutting down a thousand posts in the central government were among the important measures. I had earlier launched on a drastic reduction in expenditure in Rashtrapati Bhavan. Besides cutting out state visits abroad and sojourns within the country, I looked into each section of Rashtrapati Bhavan. I noticed that there were a number of imported cars whose fuel efficiency was low and whose maintenance costs were heavy. Besides, I noticed that while the Prime Minister and senior officials were using only Ambassador cars, the staff of Rashtrapati Bhavan were using Mercedez Benzes. I reviewed the vehicle position with my secretary and Military Secretary and drew up a list of imported cars that could be substituted by indigenous ones. We reserved two imported cars only for the use of the President and visiting dignitaries and auctioned off the rest. This auction was spread over the whole year in order to get the best prices. In all, 10 foreign cars, which had each done over 125,000 km, were sold for nearly one crore of rupees and the amount credited to the government. I also effected a cut of 10 percent in my salary.

The annual Governors' Conference which was scheduled for October could not be held owing to the political uncertainties and the economic crisis. Despite heavy pressures in December, I decided to hold the Conference before the year-end so that my successor would not be deprived of the opportunity of meeting the Governors in the year of his assuming office. The Governors' Conference is held only once a year and if not held in one year, it lapses. So the Conference was held on December 27 and 28. It was attended by the Vice-President, the Prime Minister, Ministers of the Union Government and 25 Governors and three Lt Governors.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

In my opening address I criticised the enormous size of Ministries saying, "Our body politic cannot carry so much of adipose tissue without detriment to the heart of democratic functioning." I referred to instances in which almost every member of the ruling party had been placated with a ministership or a ministerial type of sinecure post. I suggested ten percent of the membership of the legislature as a ceiling for the strength of the ministry through an amendment to the Constitution both in the interest of economy and as a cure for defections. I said, "The lure of office is the foremost infirmity in a politician and defections are its basest manifestation." The remedy I suggested was to debar the defector from any public office, elective or otherwise, for the duration of the legislature to which he had been returned.

Referring to the unseemly controversy between the legislature and the judiciary over the anti-defection law and the confrontation between Speakers of some legislatures and the judiciary, I appealed to the Prime Minister to sort out the differences so that healthy relationship between the two arms of the state may be maintained. I drew pointed attention to the "piquant situations" created by the issue of judicial directives to Governors in defection cases. In his address, the Prime Minister threw the ball into the court of the President and asked me to take the initative in the matter and find some solution.

The Governors discussed a wide range of subjects. They highlighted the deteriorating law and order situation in their states and the need to provide more Central Reserve Police Forces. They also mentioned the economy measures they had taken and agreed to retrieve articles of value in Raj Bhavans and start a museum on the model of the Rashtrapati Bhavan Museum which they said they enjoyed visiting.

In the first week of January 1992, Home Minister Chavan asked me to take further action on the Prime Minister's

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

suggestion for resolving the judiciary-legislature conflict. The Lok Sabha Speaker, who was away in South America, returned to Delhi on January 9, and I convened a meeting of Chief Justice Kania, Home Minister Chavan, Law Minister Vijayabhaskara Reddy and Speaker Shivraj Patil on January 10. Formulating the points for decision, I said that apart from the technicality of non-ratification of the 52nd Amendment to the Constitution by the requisite number of states, the rule of natural justice required at least one appeal against a decision, however eminent the person making the decision, and it should be provided in a suitable manner.

Taking into account the fact that the Speaker was subject to removal by a majority, I felt that the Speaker may be spared the duty of deciding the issue of defection, split, and other issues. In England the Speaker's post is seldom contested and the Speaker by convention continues, notwithstanding changes in government. In the absence of such a protection, Speakers in India can hardly function in an independent and objective manner. A point worth considering was that the Election Commission, which decided on disqualification of members under Article 103 of the Constitution, could be entrusted with deciding disqualifications under the anti-defection law also, with an appeal allowed to the Supreme Court.

Chief Justice Kania endorsed these ideas and said he would prefer the Supreme Court being kept out of the defection issue to avoid any confrontation between the legislature and the judiciary.

Shivraj Patil said he would consult the standing committee of the Speakers' Conference and let the group know its reactions.

In the meanwhile, the Speaker of the Manipur Assembly, whose appearance in court, the Supreme Court had directed, complied with the order and further trouble was avoided. It

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

is our habit that once a crisis passes, the endeavour to solve issues is also shelved.

After the award of Bharat Ratna to Sardar Patel, suggestions emanated from the public that the same honour should be conferred on Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Subhas Chandra Bose.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was a legendary figure in his own lifetime. India has not seen a greater champion of Hindu-Muslim unity and brotherhood than the Maulana. He resisted the Partition of India and would have even preferred the postponement of independence to the country's vivisection. He called Partition a "political defeat". Nehru greatly admired and respected him and constantly consulted him. Had the practice of awarding Bharat Ratna posthumously been in vogue, Nehru would have been the first to recommend the Maulana's name for this great honour. So, when his name was suggested for the award, I said I not only accepted the recommendation but felt proud I would have the honour of awarding Bharat Ratna to one of India's noblest sons.

I, however, felt that Subhas Chandra Bose belonged to a class by himself and was far above any mundane award. A picturesque and charismatic personality, who defied the British and fought them as a soldier, who inspired millions to sacrifice their all for the independence of the country and established a free Government of India in the Swaraj and Shaheed islands (Andaman and Nicobar), in my opinion transcended the class of common mortals.

I accepted the recommendation, however, lest it should be misinterpreted as lack of regard and respect for Subhas Chandra Bose. As it happened, the people of Bengal resented the conferment of Bharat Ratna on Netaji Subhas and wrote a number of letters asking the government to

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

withdraw the award.

J.R.D. Tata's contribution to the industrial development of India is unique. The Tata group has expanded into every conceivable field of industrial activity and has set standards of enterprise, efficiency and integrity. J.R.D. Tata was the doyen among industrialists in India.

I suggested to Prime Minister Narasimha Rao that we break the routine of honouring only politicians and confer Bharat Ratna on J.R.D. Tata. The Prime Minister readily agreed and for the first time an eminent industrialist was honoured with the highest award of Bharat Ratna.

The President of Malta, Dr. Censur Tabone, paid a return visit to India in the middle of January. During my visit to Malta, Tabone had shown keen interest in development of closer relations between India and Malta. The two families also got very close. After the ceremonial reception and the talks I hosted a banquet to the visiting President. I said India believed that much of the conflicts of the world would disappear if the states accepted the universally recognised norms of international behaviour.

I complimented Malta on its role as a catalyst by hosting the meeting of the super powers. India, I said, was watching with interest the evolving situation in Europe after the collapse of the Communist regimes and hoped that the democratic wave would gather momentum and remove the last vestiges of authoritarianism.

Replying to the welcome, Tabone emphasised the role of NAM in the changing world and called for greater consultations and cooperation between India and Malta in shaping NAM's policies. He was of the view that NAM should assume, along with other countries, the responsibility for revitalising the United Nations. Malta was keen on increasing bilateral trade and economic cooperation, he said,

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

and trusted that the agreements to be signed during his visit would help the process.

The visit consolidated the feeling of goodwill existing between the two countries and also opened new possibilities of economic cooperation.

In September 1991, Gao Jianhong, a 13-year-old school girl in central China, wrote to me inviting me to visit her home in China and asking me to send some Indian postage stamps. About the same time, an 11-year-old student Yan Chengye, from Shanghai offered 100 Yuan (Rs 540) to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund for relief of the victims of the devastating earthquake in Uttar Pradesh. This was half his earnings from a television appearance he made. I invited both of them as guests for the Republic Day celebrations. They enjoyed the Republic Day parade, the reception in the Moghul Gardens and all other festivities connected with it.

I spent some time talking to them. Yan spoke English and was very smart. For a boy of 11 years, he was well informed, articulate and inquisitive. Gao did not speak English and was a little shy. I asked them about their school timings, the subjects they studied and their extra-curricular activities. They looked rather bewildered by all the pomp and ceremony around them. I told them that all this bustle was not an everyday routine and that the National Day was something dear to us. They did some sight-seeing and also saw the Taj Mahal.

During my tenure as President I availed myself of the opportunity of the Republic Day address to the nation to put forward some thoughts of my own regarding national affairs. In 1992 also, I provoked some thinking and some criticism. I referred to the negative forces which impeded our progress and described them as the "cult of terrorism",

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

"communal virus" and a "pervasive slackening in national discipline"

I asserted that "bullets and bombs have no place in a democracy where avenues for constitutional redress of grievances exist" and lamented the recourse to cold, calculated and bizarre acts of terrorism in Punjab, Assam, Kashmir and certain other parts of the country. In order to tackle terrorism, I wanted measures to weed out the causes and conditions which bred violence. Detailing the necessary steps for this, I mentioned vigorous implementation of land reforms, development of waste land, reduction of disparities and provision of adequate opportunity for employment for youth.

Dealing with the increasing indiscipline and the palpable erosion of faith in the rule of law, I pointed out that in a true democracy, laws were observed voluntarily by the people while in a dictatorship laws were enforced. I recalled that Gandhiji had defined *Swaraj* as self-rule and self-restraint and wanted people to develop self-restraint in the interests of peace in the country.

Referring to the grave economic crisis, I said that there was an urgent need to maximise production and ensure its equitable distribution so that the weaker sections were not left to fend for themselves. I urged that "nothing that militates against the full utilisation of all existing capacities in agriculture, industry, trade, commerce, communications and banking should be tolerated or encouraged." I pleaded that "if we are to emerge from this crisis, a moratorium should be declared voluntarily at the national level for at least two years on all *bandhs*, strikes and lockouts or any other activity which impeded economic development. This is a duty which we owe to our own children and progeny." I concluded by repeating India's known stand on global issues and on the new economic world order. The speech received

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

a large measure of welcome and some criticism from trade unions and Communist Party leaders.

The guest of honour at Republic Day of 1992 was Dr. Mario Soares, President of Portugal. I had invited him to pay a state visit during my visit to that country in 1990. It may be recalled that it was Soares as Foreign Minister who broke the stalemate in our relations and restored diplomatic exchanges between the two countries. He has always been a friend of India and we developed an excellent mutual regard. It was largely at his initiative that the nagging differences over the Goan gold pledged with Portuguese bankers were solved.

Soares, who witnessed the Republic Day parade, told me that he was deeply impressed with India's progress in science and technology and the indigenisation of sophisticated defence equipment. He felt that there was immense scope for cooperation between Portugal and India in exchange of technology.

At the banquet which I hosted for the visiting President, I welcomed Dr. Mario Soares as a wise and progressive statesman who had participated in the struggle to free Portugal from the stranglehold of dictatorship and had a liberal outlook towards the developing countries. Dr. Soares in his reply sought the support of India for the right of self-determination for the people of East Timor. He gave the assurance that in the Single Market 92 in Europe, India would have its due share of trade. Pointing out that India was the largest trading partner of the European Community, Dr. Soares said that its share is likely to increase than decrease in the future. He also emphasised the importance of the North–South dialogue and warned that increasing global disparities encouraged tensions and threatened world peace.

The Presidential Party visited Bangalore and Goa before returning to Portugal.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

42

I wanted to convey to the Prime Minister formally my decision to retire, though by now it had become public knowledge by my clearing the decks. But the whole of January was so full of activity that I did not get chance for a quiet chat on non-official matters.

In the first week of February I told the Prime Minister that I had decided to retire and it was high time he started looking for my successor. He asked me why I had taken the decision to retire. I said I had held public office for 27 years and had achieved everything one could wish for. I wanted to achieve the rarest of rare virtues, contentment. I told him that over the last six months I had been preparing for it and had settled most of my domestic problems. He asked me not to announce it as it would lead to pressures on him and might cause him embarrassment. I replied that as long as it was understood as a firm decision, I was not interested in announcement. When during my visit to Calcutta in March I met Jyoti Basu, Chief Minister of West Bengal, he had asked me about my plans. I had told him of my decision. He had looked unconvinced. Later, when Jyoti Basu met me in Madras, he told me that one of my close friends had confirmed that my decision was made months back and arrangements were in hand for my settling in Madras. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister met me and sounded me on the choice for President. I told him that on all counts Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma was the best choice as he was a scholar, a mature statesman and also currently the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College of Education Jammu

Vice-President.

On May 3, when the Vice-President made the customary courtesy call, I told him that I had suggested him as my successor. Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma, with his usual nobility, asked me why I did not want to seek another term. I explained to him that I wanted to achieve the ideal of *santushti* (contentment) embodied in the *Bhagavad Gita*. Soon after this, Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma told me that the Prime Minister had formally requested him to be the official candidate of the ruling party. On May 16, the Prime Minister confirmed to me his offer to Dr. Sharma. He casually asked me about the Vice-Presidentship. I said that in view of the strong desire among the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for recognition of one of them for the high office, the search might begin in that group. Fortunately K.R. Narayanan, former Ambassador of India to China and the USA, with a very distinguished record in the Foreign Office and as Minister of State in the Rajiv Gandhi government, possessed all the requisite qualifications. My suggestion was taken note of by the Prime Minister.
I was happy that both Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma and K.R.Narayanan later got elected comfortably.

The Prince of Wales and Princess Diana arrived in Delhi on February 10, on a six-day visit to India. The royal couple had a series of engagements such as opening the new British Council building in Delhi and a meeting with the Indo-British Industrialists Forum. The Prince of Wales, who is a keen polo player, had also agreed to take part in an exhibition match in Jaipur. Princess Diana had a separate programme of a visit to the Taj Mahal. I hosted a lunch for Prince Charles which was attended by the Vice-President, the Prime Minister and members of the Cabinet, businessmen and leading journalists and artists.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Collection, Bantalab, Jammu

Prince Charles, who was the patron of the Prince's Youth Business Trust of Britain, inaugurated a similar organisation in India named Bharat Yuva Shakti Trust headed by J.R.D. Tata. The object of the Trust, which is a non-profit organisation, is to help unemployed youth to start their own small business or industry. In his speech launching BYSTI, the Prince warned the Trust that "merely giving money to the unemployed would not serve any purpose" and added, "We must provide them proper advice so that they can start their business or industry." He concluded by saying, "I look forward to a continuing worthwhile relationship between BYSTI and my Trust in the years to come."

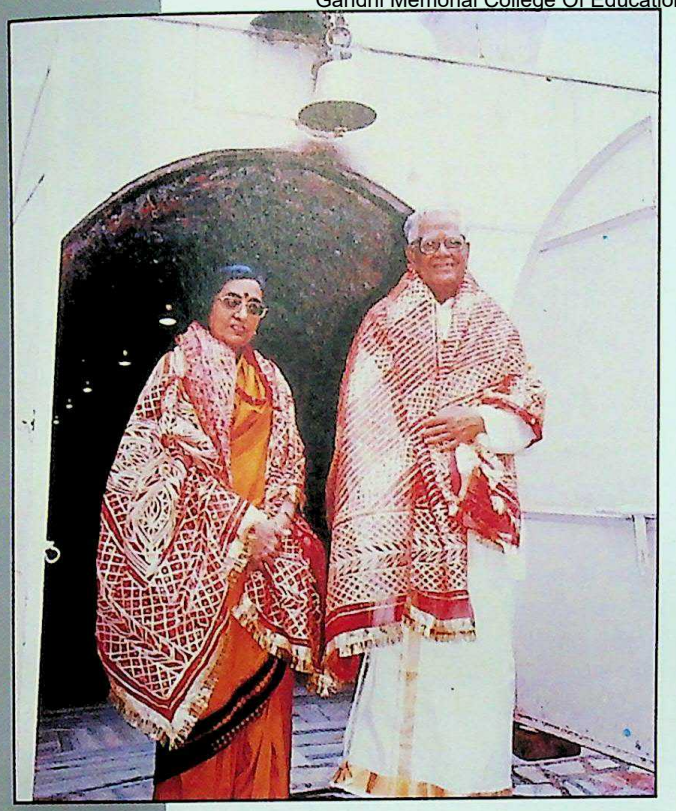
It had now become a custom for visiting dignitaries to take a stroll in the Moghul Gardens. As usual, my wife, I and my daughter Lakshmi Venkatesan, one of the trustees of BYSTI, who liaises with Prince Charles' British Trust, took the royal couple around the Moghul Gardens. The Superintendent of the Gardens, S.K. Mathur, accompanied the party and explained the special features of this renowned garden. Princess Diana showed a lot of interest in the varieties of flowers and plants. We have about 250 varieties of roses. The garden was at its best and the couple spent more than an hour going round and talking about nothing but flowers and plants.

Suddenly Princess Diana turned to Mathur and asked him, "Do you talk to the plants?" Mathur at once replied without any hesitation, "Yes, I do and that is perhaps the reason why they flourish and are in such a bloom." It appeared that Prince Charles had once said that he used to talk to the flowers and plants. Maybe the Princess wanted to check whether one could talk to plants at all.

Mathur, who had been associated with Rashtrapati Bhavan for 20 years and served two Presidents, told *The Hindustan Times*: "The present President, Mr R. Venkata-

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

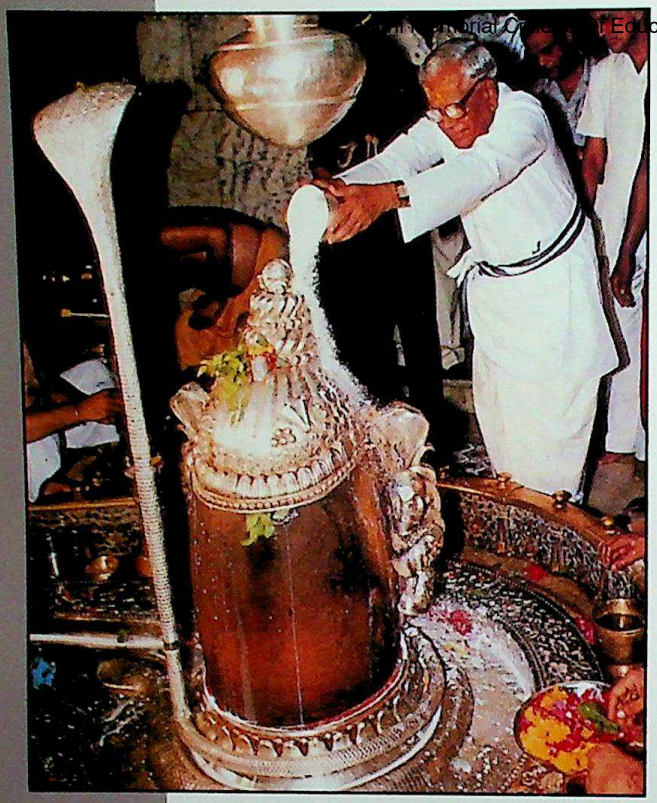


left: Vaishno Devi Shrine - Jammu, (Jammu & Kashmir).

below: Feeding a fawn.

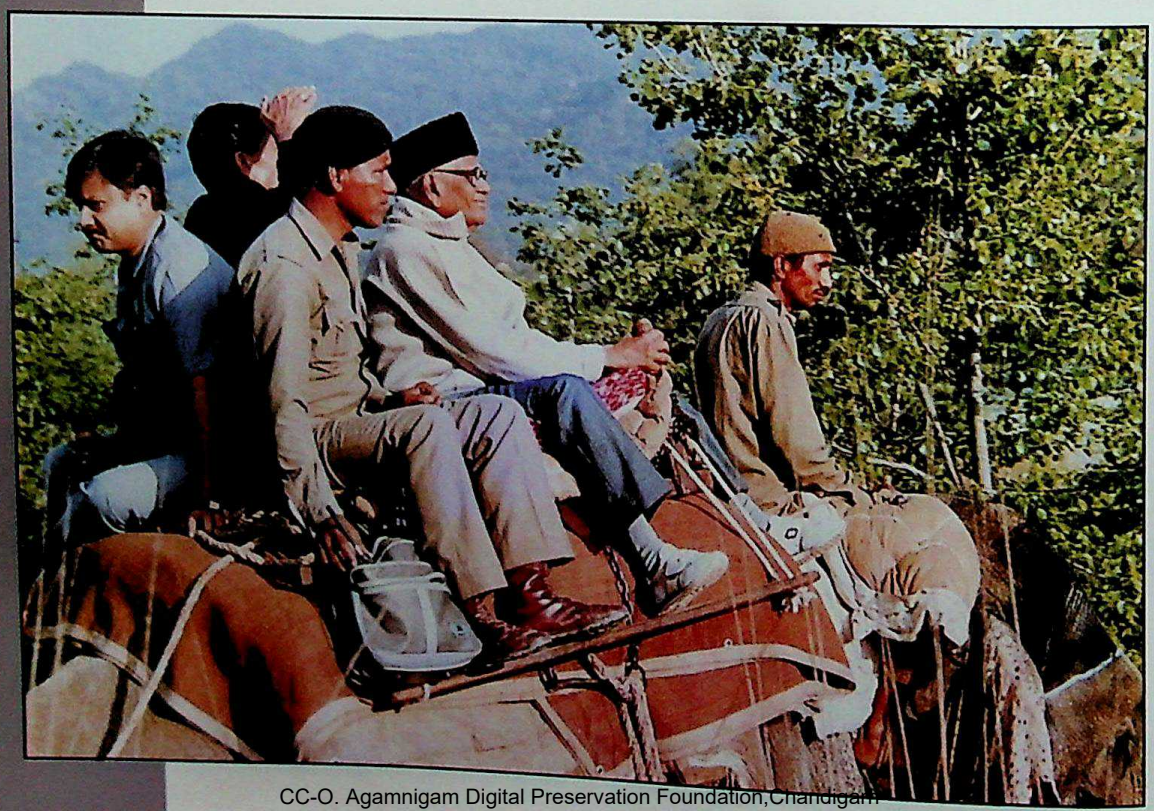
CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Digitized by Sri Pratap Singh Memorial College of Education Bantalab Jammu



left: At a prayer ceremony.

below: Safari in Jim Corbett Park.



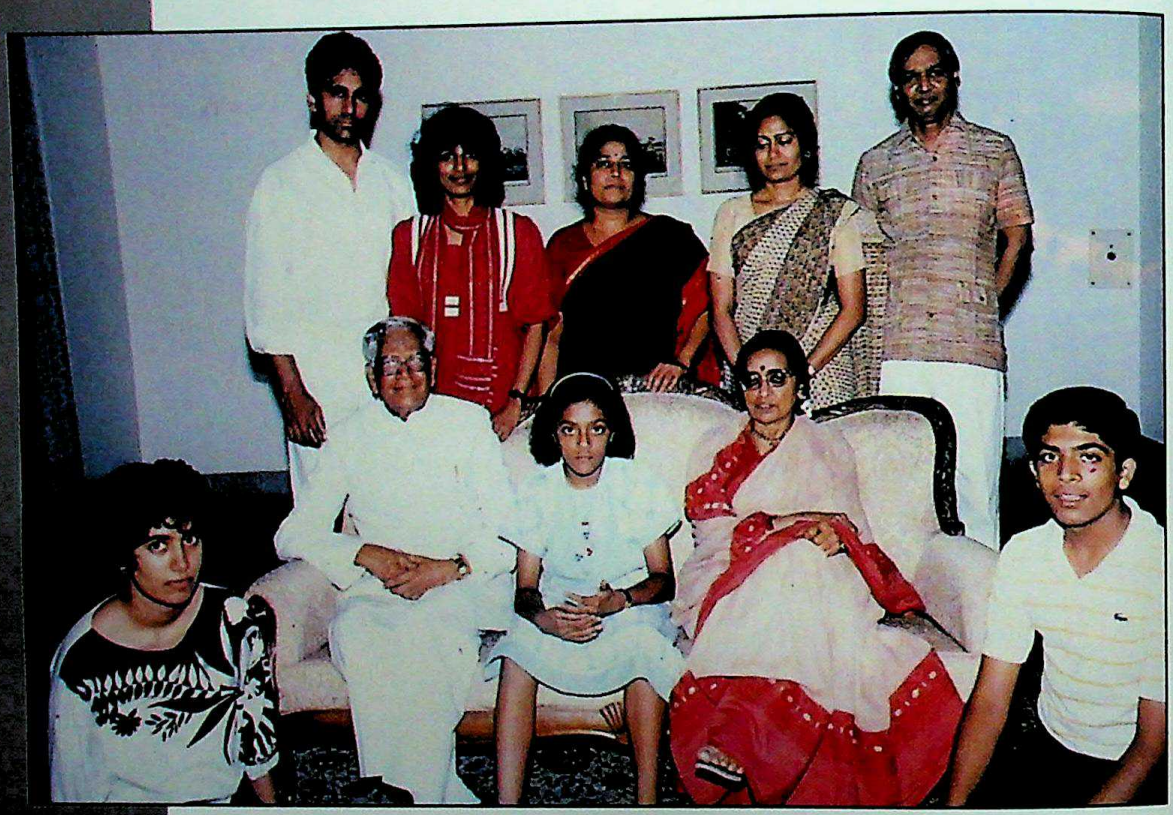
CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

At the Bird Island in Seychelles.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

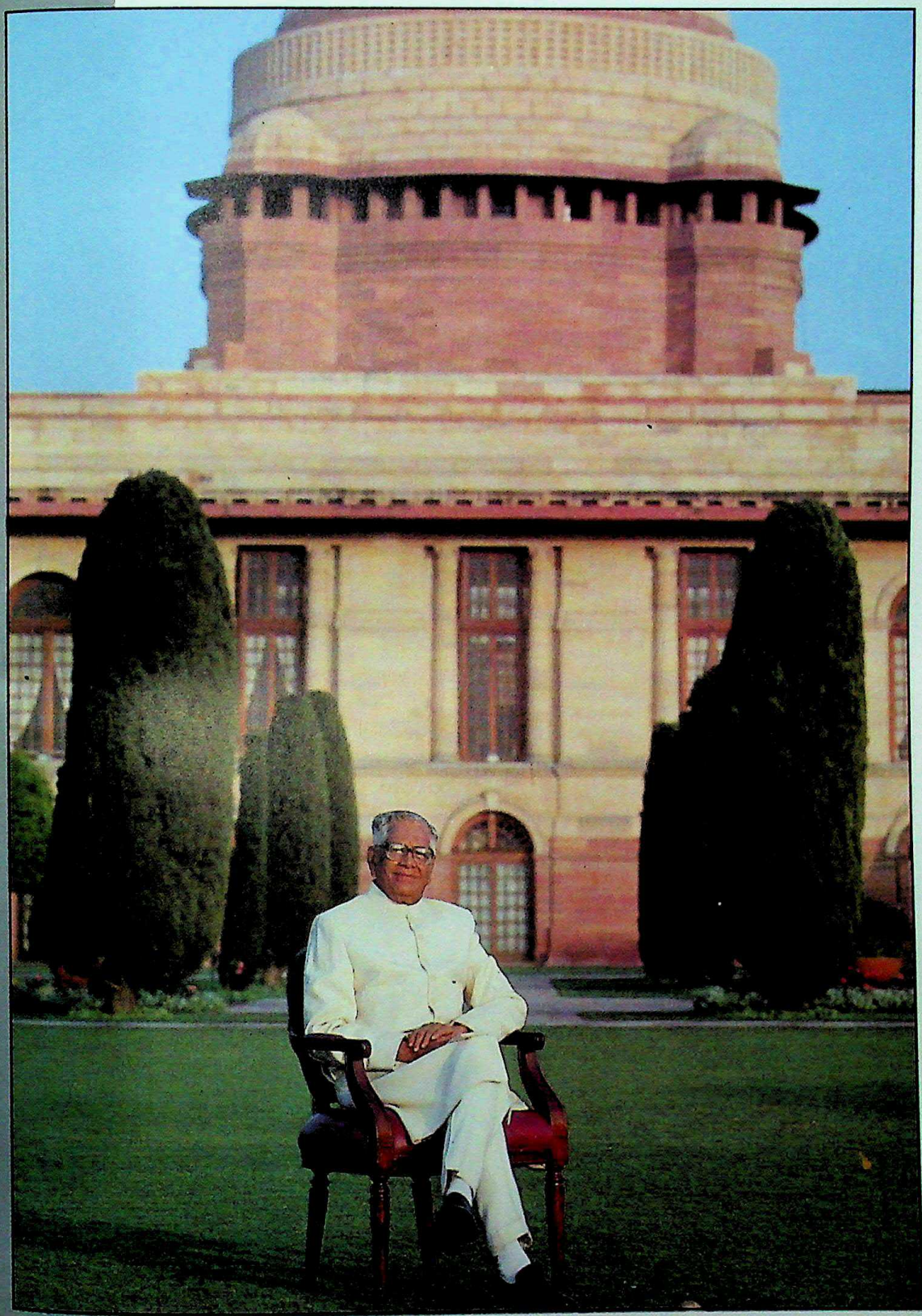
Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu



A family photograph.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

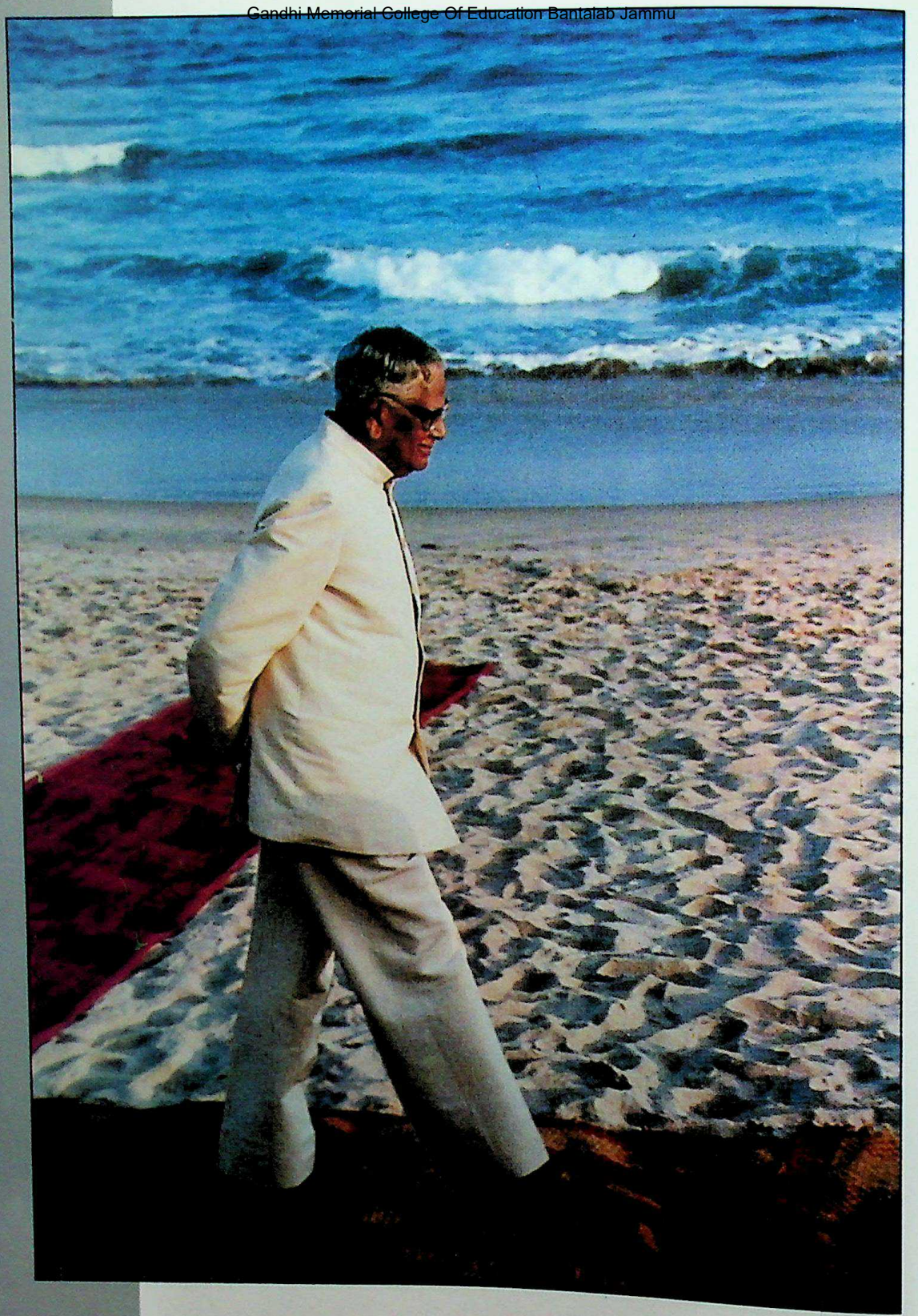
Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu



CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Posing for a photograph in the Rashtrapati Bhavan lawns.

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu



CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

raman, has a deep inborn love for flowers, plants and trees. A fortnight after taking over as President, he desired to develop a forest on the northern part of the President's Estate." This 'north rectangle' as it is called, has now about 1,000 varieties of trees, both evergreen and flowering. One can see an avenue of bottle palm and Ashoka pendula alternately planted, making the drive from the North Avenue gate a very elegant sight. Another interesting horticultural feature is a graft of peepul and neem trees, both indigenous. Tree plantation projects have been carried out in other parts of the Estate also by Mathur according to the wishes of the President.

It further said: "Mr Venkataraman's interest in horticulture is quite varied. On his advice varieties of bananas, including red banana, were introduced in the President's Estate and they have acclimatised so well that some plants bore bunches having more than two hundred bananas. The President has personally been looking after each plant and has guided the concerned horticulture staff about the cultivation of these bananas. He has also been keen on papayas obtained from Coimbatore, which have yielded fruits more than 3 kg each.

"His interest is not limited to trees; in fact, he is also very fond of dahlias, chrysanthemums and roses and several more varieties of these have been introduced. A variety of chrysanthemum has recently been named 'R. Venkataraman' in honour of the President. This variety will be displayed at the international chrysanthemum show to be held in 1993.

"The President's keen interest in horticulture has given a new look to the forecourt area of Rashtrapati Bhavan which looks colourful with shrubs, foliage and cannas. And two saluting elephants in wire and creepers welcome the guests at the entrance. This had been done at the behest of the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

President, who has taken personal interest in it."

During the early part of 1992, there was a spate of state visits from the newly-independent republics of the erstwhile Soviet Union. The constituent units of the Commonwealth of Independent States were keen to assert themselves and demonstrate their independence through the establishment of direct links with other countries. In view of the close association of India with the Soviet Union, leaders of the new states were keen to visit India as early as possible and establish direct contact. Considering the advantages of establishing friendly relations with these new states, we managed to accept all these requests though there was some inconvenience.

The first to initiate the series of visits was the President of Kazakhstan who arrived on February 21, a Friday. Two-thirds the size of India, Kazakhstan has vast agricultural and mineral wealth and a sound economy. President Nazarbayev and Madame Nazarbayev were somewhat reticent, perhaps because of the language barrier. In his talks, he told me that the Commonwealth of Independent States was something like the British Commonwealth consisting of several sovereign states, and Kazakhstan wanted to follow independent economic policies with freedom to negotiate and enter into agreements with other countries. He said that his country had earlier some trade and training contacts with India and he now wanted to have full-fledged bilateral relations.

The ceremonial reception and the parade deeply impressed the President and he mentioned it to me as we walked to the state banquet.

Hardly two days later, President Sam Nujoma of Namibia came on a state visit. An old friend of the country, who had struggled hard to gain freedom for Namibia from the clutches of South Africa, he was accorded a ceremonial

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

reception on February 24. It may be recalled that the German colony of South West Africa was placed by the League of Nations as a mandated territory with South Africa, which illegally annexed it. Despite U.N. resolutions and the judgement of the International Court of Justice, South Africa refused to annul the annexation. The freedom struggle spearheaded by Dr. Nujoma naturally turned into an armed struggle supported by all African countries as well as the non-aligned nations. India crusaded for Namibian independence both in the United Nations and outside and also provided material and monetary assistance. In the U.N.-supervised elections, Nujoma came out successful and became the head of state. I had met Nujoma several times earlier and had shown keen interest in the progress of the freedom movement led by him. He said he had come to Delhi to express his country's gratitude to India for its constant material, moral and diplomatic support to Namibia's bitter struggle for freedom. He also thanked India for extending full diplomatic recognition to the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) long before Namibia attained independence.

On February 25, Nujoma was presented the Indira Gandhi award for "peace, disarmament and development" for 1990. At a glittering ceremony at the Ashoka Hall, I said, " By choosing you for the award of the Indira Gandhi prize, the international jury has given us an opportunity to pay our tribute to your valiant contribution in leading the people of Namibia to liberty." In his acceptance speech Nujoma, after profusely thanking India for the honour conferred on him, said that while the East-West cold war was over, the North–South tussle in the economic field continued, and called for unity among non-aligned nations and a vigorous South–South dialogue so that they could bargain effectively with the developed countries. He called for continued pressure on the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Pretoria Government for the total abandonment of apartheid, and for ushering in real democracy, peace and brotherhood in South Africa.

The customary address of the President to both Houses of Parliament at the commencement of the first session each year was delivered by me on February 24. As stated earlier, the speech is always prepared by the government. It said the government had fulfilled the assurance to hold elections in Punjab and was committed to finding a just and amicable solution to all outstanding issues in Punjab. The government claimed credit for bringing down the inflation rate from 16 to 12 percent and also for improving the foreign exchange reserves which stood at Rs 10,000 crores now. There was the usual warning to Pakistan against clandestine support to terrorists in Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir. There was also the customary disturbance of the address by one or two members of Parliament.

The President's address was followed by the presentation of the Budget on February 29, bringing out the absurdity of following the British practice of a speech from the throne. Except for fiscal proposals and adjustments, the rest of the budget speech was a mere repetition. What struck me as odd was the absence of the words "socialism or socialistic pattern" in the budget speech for the first time since Independence. Even lip service to the goal had been dropped. It appeared to me that the government was under a mistaken notion that socialism was the antithesis of a market economy. On the other hand, the socialist governments in Sweden and New Zealand, which have provided state cover for its citizens from womb to tomb, have market economies. Unless we harmonise people's welfare and market economy, the country may not be stable.

On March 11, I inaugurated the biggest naval air station

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

in South East Asia, INS Rajali at Arakkonam near Madras. It was one of the projects I had helped during my term as Defence Minister. It has the largest runway in Asia — about 4,500 metres — and can take the biggest aircraft. The station is of great strategic importance for the Navy's round-the-clock surveillance of the coasts.

Dedicating the station to the nation I complimented the Indian Navy on its strength and prowess and called it a "maritime renaissance". "As a consequence," I said, "India occupies a dominant position in the Indian Ocean capable of defending not only the sea frontiers but even the ocean-going vessels in the global trade routes."

Union Defence Minister Sharad Pawar called upon the armed forces to be in a state of perpetual readiness to meet unforeseen eventualities. Janaki Venkataraman named the station "INS Rajali" and unveiled a plaque.

On March 17, President Askar Akaev of Kyrghizistan, one of the Central Asian republics of the Commonwealth of Independent States, arrived on a state visit. He was one of the Communist leaders but had redesignated himself a 'socialist'. He was the head of the Academy of Sciences and an intellectual. He spoke with clarity and firmness on all important issues.

During talks with me, the President said that even though the majority of the population of Kyrghizistan was Muslim, they had no intention of joining the Islamic bloc. He wanted to develop strong relations with China and India and to project his country as a secular modern state.

In my banquet speech I referred to the importance India attached to close relations with the Central Asian republics and to our common belief in secularism and democracy. I said both were multi-religious and multi-ethnic countries committed to secularism. Adverting to the economic reforms

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

launched by us, I said we had extensive experience in managing a diverse and dynamic mixed economy and that we would be happy to share our experience with the friendly people of Kyrghizistan in this and in other areas of mutual interest.

Replying to the toast, Akaev explained that though there was a renewal of interest in religious matters in his country it was against any form of extremism. He said that legislation had been enacted to ban formation of political parties based on religion. He asserted, "We categorically rejected extremism of any kind in any sphere of policy or ideology. Let it be neither extremism of the Communist type nor of religious fanatics." He quoted Mahatma Gandhi who had said, "The aim of these religions is one — peace."

On international relations, Akaev affirmed that his country was determined to follow the "model of permanent neutrality" and would not join any military union or bloc. He signed a number of agreements with India to assert his country's independence.

Within a few days of the visit of the President of Kyrghizistan, the President of Ukraine, Leonid Kravchuk, arrived in Delhi on March 26. We accorded him the usual ceremonial welcome which deeply impressed him and Madame Kravchuk. As we walked to their suite, the President said that Rashtrapati Bhavan resembled the Kremlin. Ukraine had formed part of the Soviet Union from its inception in 1917. A number of nuclear plants as also the Black Sea fleet are located on its territory. Attempts to have them transferred to the unified command of the CIS were thwarted by Ukraine.

During my talks with Kravchuk, I enquired whether Ukraine would strengthen its relationship with the European Community or with the CIS or the Islamic countries. He replied that the CIS was a loose organisation

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

and its members were more keen on asserting their independence and freedom to deal with the world than in strengthening it. He said Ukrainians were Europeans and not Russians or Muslims and they would endeavour to get closer to the European Community, try to join the Common Market and integrate with Europe. He saw similar trends among the Czechs and Hungarians.

At the banquet hosted by me, I expressed the hope that the visit of President Kravchuk would start a new era in bilateral relations and that Ukraine would lend its support in the United Nations for the establishment of "a new, just and equitable international order."

In his reply, the visiting President made a significant statement that his country wanted to be a non-nuclear state and its neighbours also shared this objective. He spoke of wider interaction between our two countries. Ukraine also signed a treaty of friendship and cooperation with India.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

43

On April 11, Dr. M.M. Thomas, Governor of Nagaland, was removed. The Rashtrapati Bhavan communique stated: "The President has been pleased to direct that Dr. M.M. Thomas shall cease to hold office as Governor of Nagaland and has appointed Mr. Loknath Mishra, Governor of Assam, to discharge the functions of the Governor of Nagaland...."

The Chief Minister of Nagaland, Vamuzo, it was alleged, apprehending defections from the ruling group and the fall of his government had immediately advised the Governor to dissolve the State Assembly. On March 27, Dr. Thomas, without consulting the President or the Central Government, had dissolved the Assembly and asked Vamuzo to continue as caretaker Chief Minister.

The Union Government, expressing dissatisfaction over several actions of the Governor, recommended to the President his removal. As I have mentioned earlier, the relations between the Governor and the Central Government have not been defined anywhere. Whether the Governor should consult the Union Home Ministry on a matter of this kind is not clear. Some Governors had consulted the President as in the case of Haryana, where the Governor consulted me on the dissolution of the Assembly on the advice of Chief Minister Chautala, who appeared to have lost his majority. My advice to the Governor was that he should ask the Chief Minister to prove his majority in the House. But such consultation was not a statutory obligation on the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Governor.

I have always held the view that the Prime Minister and the Cabinet should take the responsibility for defending their action in Parliament and public and that the President should not assume the role of an appellate authority over the Government's action. I therefore accepted the recommendation and issued the communique cited earlier.

Some commentators were of the view that the President should have heard the Governor before removing him, as if he were a court of appeal. This arises out of a misunderstanding of the Constitution. The President does not remove a Governor. It is the Union Government which removes the Governor and the President authenticates the action. Dr. Ambedkar had stated several times in the Constituent Assembly and the Supreme Court has firmly held that the term President is a shorthand form of the expression, "the Union Government". I have consistently resisted all attempts to make the office of the President a second centre of authority in the country.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Dr. Boutros Boutros Ghali, called on me. He felt that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States had become the sole super power. This was obvious from the manner in which the U.N. was made the instrument of U.S. policy in the Gulf War. When I complimented him on his uncontested election as Secretary-General and hoped that the interests of the Third World countries would be safeguarded, Boutros-Ghali was frank enough to say he was not sure if he could do much to satisfy the aspirations of the developing countries.

I probed his mind on the expansion of the Security Council, since the membership of the United Nations had increased from 55 in 1945, when the Charter was adopted in San Francisco, to 162. Boutros Ghali said it would open a Pandora's box and that there would be no unanimity on this

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Rantalab Jammu

issue. I recalled my association with the U.N. Administrative Tribunal for 25 years. Boutros-Ghali paid warm tributes to Madam Bastid who was my colleague and President of the Tribunal before me and said she was one of the evaluators of his thesis for his doctorate and he had known her for over twenty years.

On April 28, the President of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al Nahyan, paid a state visit to India. He had been President for 25 years and had vastly improved agriculture, power and communications in the U.A.E. with the enormous oil money. The Emirates employ a large number of Indians, as many as 400,000. During my talks I thanked the President for the consideration shown to the Indian community. The Sheikh was all praise for the Indian community's skill and competence and found them peace-loving and law-abiding. The Sheikh referred to the high cost of medical facilities in Western countries and compared it with India where he said equally good quality service was available at a much lower cost.

At the banquet, the visiting President reiterated his desire to have greater economic cooperation between India and the Emirates. In the customary exchange of gifts the President left behind a necklace of exquisite beauty for the First Lady, worth several thousands of rupees. It now adorns the museum I set up in Rashtrapati Bhavan.

During the halcyon days of "Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai," I had a strong desire to visit China, but as I was a delegate to the United Nations General Assembly session every year I was not included in any one of the numerous delegations visiting China. The era of hostility since 1962 demolished my hopes of ever visiting China. Rajiv Gandhi's visit to China in 1988 paved the way for dialogue and exchange of visits. During Premier Li Peng's visit to India in December 1991, he had extended an oral invitation to me to visit China as early

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

as possible. Since an invitation to the President had to come formally from the head of state of the inviting state, I contented myself with politely thanking Li Peng.

During the Republic Day celebrations when I was having tea in the Moghul Gardens with my Chinese guests, school-children Gao Jianhong and Yan Chengye, the Chinese Ambassador handed over to me the invitation from his government to visit China as early as possible. I told him that the invitation had to be routed through the External Affairs Ministry and the Ambassador said this had already been done.

The External Affairs Ministry was excited over the invitation. It was the first invitation from China to the Indian head of state since Independence. It was also interpreted as evidence of the Chinese desire for a dialogue. The Chinese sent a draft programme for the visit from May 18 to 23, which was both heavy and tight.

Since the External Affairs Ministry attached great importance to this visit I was advised to relax my rule against taking journalists on state visits and allow half a dozen senior journalists to accompany me so that they could give a feedback of the Chinese reactions to the visit and our discussions. Some senior journalists also spoke to me about the importance of the visit and the advantage of having a group of experts for exchange of ideas and consultation.

My party included my family, Rangarajan Kumaramangalam, Minister-in-Waiting; P. Murari, my Secretary; J.N.Dixit, Secretary, External Affairs Ministry; Salman Hyder, Ambassador of India to China; journalists Nikhil Chakravartty, H.K. Dua, V.K. Madhavan Kutty, J.P. Chaturvedi, K.K. Katyal, Inder Malhotra, Prem Prakash and Saeed Naqvi, and the other usual staff.

We took off at 11.30 p.m., so that we would arrive in Beijing at 8 a.m. local time. While seeing me off, Prime

CC-0. Mumukshu Bhawan Varanasi Collection. Digitized by eGangotri

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education, Bantalab Jammu

Minister Narasimha Rao mentioned to me that he was expecting some positive results from this important visit.

The special Air-India Boeing 747 was very smooth and comfortable. The flying time from Delhi to Beijing is six hours and as Beijing time is 2 hours ahead of the Indian Standard Time, we reached there at 8.30 a.m. We were received by the Chinese Minister-in-waiting and the Chinese Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs. The Chinese Ambassador to India and the Ambassadors of SAARC countries, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka, were introduced to me. There were also a number of Indian Embassy officials and their spouses.

Leaving the airport we arrived at the state guest house, Diaoyutai, which is a 40-minute drive from the airport. In China all airports are far away from the cities and often involve a drive of not less than 30 minutes.

After a briefing session with Ambassador Salman Hyder, we left for the Great Hall of the People for the ceremonial reception. On alighting from the car we were greeted by two pretty Chinese children, a boy and a girl, with bouquets. This is the standard practice throughout China. President Yang Shangkun, who was 83, greeted us very cordially. He was a father figure, benign, friendly and pleasant. After formal introduction the two Presidents ascended the saluting base when the Indian and Chinese national anthems were played and a salute of 21 guns fired. This was followed by a review of the parade by both the Presidents and a march past by a guard of honour.

The meeting between the Indian and Chinese delegations took place in the traditional meeting hall near by. It was informal and besides myself, was attended by Rangarajan Kumaramangalam, the Secretary to the President, the Secretary to the External Affairs Ministry and officials. On the Chinese side, besides the President, there were the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Foreign Minister and officials.

After extending a warm welcome to me, President Yang said, "I know you have attached great importance to the friendly relations between our two countries. I would like to express our sincere appreciation and gratitude for this and I wish your visit a complete success."

In my statement I recalled the days of cordiality and friendship that prevailed in the fifties when Nehru and Zhou En-lai had formulated the five principles, "Panch Sheel", of peaceful coexistence and set a model for bilateral relationship. I said it should be our endeavour to restore the same spirit of cordiality between our two countries. I gave a detailed account of India's progress in agriculture, industry, science and technology and our new economic policy of liberalisation launched on a massive scale. I said there was great scope for bilateral economic cooperation.

I reiterated our position that India had consistently and for long accepted Tibet as an autonomous region of China. Nevertheless we respected and honoured the Dalai Lama as a great spiritual leader. I pointed out that in a democratic country like India the views of the people should not be confused with that of the Government of India. I did not specifically harp on the border issue but expressed our willingness to settle all bilateral issues through discussions and negotiations in the spirit of Panch Sheel.

President Yang responded warmly. He said that he remembered the cordiality and friendship that prevailed in the fifties and the Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai slogan of those days. He wished to revive that spirit.

He endorsed my view that all differences between the two countries should be sorted out by mutual discussions. Referring to economic policies, the President, said that their aim was to speed up reform of state-owned and rural enterprises and they wanted to pursue an open door policy,

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

and attract foreign investment, technology and even expertise from outside. He added that India had enough experience and that China was ready to develop friendly and beneficial relations in this area.

The Chinese President asserted that the development of China and India would constitute a stabilising factor for peace in Asia and would not pose a threat to any other country. "In this context," the President said, "your visit is of special significance."

In my brief reply I mentioned the similar problems faced by India in changing over to a market economy and hoped that both countries would learn from each other through exchange of information and experiences. I formally invited the President to visit India. I cautioned him against choosing summer for the visit saying that our summers were so hot that one could cook chicken in the sun. With exchange of pleasantries the meeting concluded.

In the afternoon we visited the palace complex of the last dynasty that ruled over China. It is called the 'Forbidden City', because no common man was allowed to go into the palace complex during the emperor's rule nor was anyone allowed to build any structure higher than any building in the palace. The palace complex is a maze of buildings and since they were built at different times, one has to ascend and descend several times to go from one building to the other. We saw the thrones, beds, antique pieces and art objects, and we were not spared even the apartments of the king's concubines. Since we had seen the film "The Last Emperor" many places looked familiar. We were shown also the "Hall of Greater Harmony", "Hall of Middle Harmony" and "Hall of Preserving Harmony."

Despite the explanations of the guide, we could not really grasp the sense of the triple facets of harmony.

We saw the imperial gardens and some old relics of great

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

value and spent some time in this huge palace area.

The banquet by the Chinese President, at their usual hour of 7 p.m., was different in many ways from our banquets. In all our formal banquets the guests are introduced to the visiting dignitary, served cocktails and then ushered in to the banquet hall. In Beijing, there are no introductions, no cocktails and no conversation before the dinner. When we arrived we were greeted by the President and taken straight to the dining table. Nor were any speeches delivered and toasts proposed. I was informed that the practice of making formal speeches at dinner had been dispensed with during the last few years.

As soon as the host and I arrived at the banquet, the national anthems of both the countries were played and service started. The Chinese had prepared delicious vegetarian food and President Yang also took vegetarian food as a gesture of regard for the visiting President. The Chinese dinner consisted of an endless number of courses of small servings and repeated service of green tea without milk or sugar.

During the banquet I told President Yang that both of us had one thing in common, namely, the trade union background. I asked him how labour was responding to the new policy of market economy structured on efficiency and competition. He candidly told me that labour was opposed to "hire and fire". Labour in China had all along been guaranteed employment and adequate wages regardless of productivity and efficiency and the adjustment to the new system was causing acute problems. He hoped that the issue could be solved by transferring surplus labour to new enterprises and retraining them for different jobs. He added that China was moving cautiously on this issue. The President then referred to the break-up of the Soviet Union and said China would march only step by step towards

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

economic liberalisation. He saw no threat of Islamic fundamentalism in the Central Asian Republics. He recalled that the President of Kazakhstan had assured him that religion would not play an important role even in this predominantly Muslim state. President Yang also said that I could discuss the economic aspects fully with the General Secretary of the party when I met him. The dinner lasted barely 75 minutes.

On return to the state guest house a cultural programme of Indian dance by Chinese children was presented. The dancers were two cute little nine-year-old girls and a 12-year-old girl. The older girl gave a nice demonstration of Bharatanatyam and Kathak. Thereafter all the three girls performed an exquisite piece of Bharatanatyam. The rhythm, poise and the dresses could be the envy of the accomplished artists in our country. The Bharatanatyam instructor, Madam Jung, had been to India several times and had learnt dance from eminent people like Uday Shankar and Birju Maharaj and at Kalakshetra in Tamil Nadu.

In the forenoon of May 19, we visited the Great Wall of China, which was reached after a 45-minute drive from Beijing through picturesque country. I looked at both sides of the road to see signs of rural poverty but I could hardly find any. The Great Wall is 6,700 km long, built over 400 years, in patches, at different times by different dynasties that ruled over parts of China to guard against invasion by Mongols and others. It is a massive 1.8-metre (six feet) wide rampart with steep climbs. I walked up a few kilometres and enjoyed the magnificent sight. Many of my companions were unable to cope with the steep climb and started to halt at different places for a little rest. I took some beautiful pictures. Lots of tourists were moving up and down and enjoying every minute of their stay. After spending an hour we bade goodbye to one of the great wonders of the world.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

At 3 p.m., we met Jiang Zemin, General Secretary of the Communist Party, who is very high in the official hierarchy and is the principal policy-maker in China. The Indian delegation had eight members and the Chinese side had four. Included in its delegation was the head of the International Liaison Department of the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese Ambassador to India.

Jiang Zemin received us warmly, mentioned that it was the first visit of an Indian head of state and hoped that the visit would be pleasant and fruitful. I thanked the General Secretary and the Government of China for their kind invitation and generous hospitality extended to me and the members of my delegation. I dwelt on the rich culture and civilisation of India and China and how the industrial revolution has tilted progress from the ancient countries to the new ones. I complimented China on its progress in agriculture and industry and more particularly on the social security measures for the masses.

I explained in detail India's progress in food self-sufficiency, industrial output and in science and technology. I said though the per capita income might be low in India the quality of life in terms of education, health, roads and communications was comparable to some of the advanced countries.

I explained the economic liberalisation measures initiated by India and said both countries had embarked on the road to a competitive market economy and that there should be immense scope for joint ventures in both countries. I said that a free market economy did not exist in the world and the very countries which extolled the free market economy had their own quota and non-tariff barriers. Therefore the developing countries should have greater mutual cooperation rather than have recourse to aid from developed countries. I also explained the salient features of a

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

mixed economy and said that the public sector had to be made more efficient and competitive.

Jiang Zemin replied, "You have made a masterly analysis of the present issues" and added that both China and India had a resilient cultural tradition of thousands of years but remained feudal societies during the industrial revolution which warped their progress. In his view India and China should redouble their efforts lest they lag behind the industrialised countries which had very high productivity. The restrictions imposed in the earlier era by both China and India had led to low industrial efficiency and needed to be corrected.

China had adopted a paternal attitude to labour, protecting wages, employment and benefits and it would be difficult to change over to the system of "hire and fire" overnight. That would cause social disturbances. Nevertheless, China, under the reforms introduced by Deng Xiaoping, was trying to find alternative employment for people rendered surplus by setting up townships with state-owned medium and small industries.

Jiang Zemin was categorical that the collapse of the Soviet Union had transformed a bipolar world into a multipolar one. He added that China stood committed to a new order based on the five principles of coexistence. It would not interfere in the internal affairs of other countries, and was opposed to hegemonism and power politics.

The General Secretary had a dig at the United States for using the army to quell the recent racial violence in California while preaching human rights to other countries. (An obvious reference to American criticism of the suppression of the Tiananmen Square agitation.)

In my reply I referred to the boundary question and said that India wanted to solve the issue by peaceful means — discussions and negotiations — and that both sides should

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

exercise utmost patience and restraint. Jian Zemin chimed in with my views and commented, "You cannot dig a well with one stroke of the spade."

I extended an invitation to the General Secretary to pay an official visit to India at his earliest convenience which he gladly accepted. The meeting, which lasted an hour and ten minutes, was marked by utmost cordiality and goodwill.

Immediately after our talks with the General Secretary, we had to rush for talks-cum-dinner with Prime Minister Li Peng. This was regarded as the most important meeting of the tour. Before I left Delhi I had extensive confabulations with Prime Minister Narasimha Rao on the scope and range of my discussions with the Chinese leaders and I was told that the talks with Li Peng were crucial to the building of a proper climate for harmonious relations between the two countries. I told Narasimha Rao that it would be appropriate to raise specifically the border issue and suggest steps that could ease tensions and build mutual confidence. I had earlier conveyed these to Narasimha Rao at the time of Li Peng's visit to India. My suggestion to Li Peng was demilitarisation of the entire border, avoidance of proximity confrontation in areas where there was eyeball to eyeball troop deployment and communication of any movement of forces by either side to prevent misunderstandings. Narasimha Rao said some such suggestions were already under consideration and that I could approach them without creating any wrong impression within our country. I said that I had suggested the same to Rajiv Gandhi prior to his visit to China but being the first to break the ice, he could not go into details. I discussed the question with Dixit, Foreign Secretary, and made several drafts of the manner of presenting the proposals.

Li Peng received me and the delegation warmly. He recalled his visit to India and the greater understanding that

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education,Rantalab Jammu

was achieved between the two countries. As a result, he said, both countries expressed similarity of views at the Security Council meeting in New York. He also expressed appreciation of India's support to China at the Human Rights Commission.

I responded by thanking the Government and people of China for their cordial welcome and generous hospitality. I recalled that the Chinese Prime Minister's visit after a lapse of 31 years had left a deep impression on the people and Government of India.

Explaining the policy of economic liberalisation, I said that we were proceeding cautiously and had done away with most of the controls over production, distribution, capital issues and imports. We had also opened the doors for greater flow of foreign investments. In this context I hoped India and China would expand trade and joint ventures and exchange of technologies.

On the border issue I said: "I would like to touch on a sensitive issue. That is the border question. It is our view that this issue should be settled by mutual discussions and negotiations and at no time should we resort to violence. The five principles (Panch Sheel) enunciated by the great leaders, Zhou En-lai and Jawaharlal Nehru, should continue to govern our relationship. I appreciate what you have said about seeking a solution on the basis of mutual understanding, mutual accommodation and mutual adjustment. I am aware that this is not an issue we can solve overnight."

In order to strengthen confidence-building measures between the two countries I said: "I have a suggestion to make in this connection. Both parties could examine the feasibility of reducing forces on both sides of the border in order to create a climate of mutual goodwill."

In areas where there was close proximity confrontation I

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

suggested that the forces might fall back to some positions so that they might not be provoked into action by stray and unintended action. As Defence Minister I had seen some areas where there was eyeball to eyeball confrontation and had always felt these were potential danger spots. I also offered the suggestion that the two commands might exchange information regarding troop movements and deployment to avoid any mutual suspicion about the purposes of such movements. The stand of the Government of India that Tibet was an autonomous region of China and that the Dalai Lama was respected and honoured as a religious and spiritual leader by India was clarified to Li Peng.

Our avowed policy of good-neighbourly relations with all countries of the region was unfortunately not reciprocated by Pakistan, I said, and added that its covert and overt help extended to terrorists in Punjab and Kashmir stood in the way of normalising relations with that country. When the terrorists massacred innocent people who had nothing to do with Pakistan's dispute nobody voiced concern about human rights violation but on the other hand some people waxed eloquent only about the human rights of the militants and criminals, I pointed out. I criticised the attitude of the Western powers which tried to deprive the developing countries of loans and assistance on the charge of violations of human rights.

Li Peng in his response stated, "I have listened with great attention to your views and you have made very constructive suggestions." He said both countries achieved liberation more or less the same time and had made remarkable progress during these years. "In China, we speak highly of achievements made by India in science and technology," he said and wanted greater exchange of technology suitable to each other.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Regarding the border problem, Li Peng said, " I agree with you that it is a legacy of history. Since we are working to develop friendly relations, surely it should be resolved. As to the form of solution, I agree that this should be peaceful, non-violent. So long as both sides act in good faith sooner or later it will be resolved. While we discuss the issue, it is of vital importance to take various measures to create a peaceful and friendly environment and it is important to carry out these measures simultaneously. Our two sides have already started negotiations on mutual reduction of military forces in the border area, and avoidances of close range confrontation and conduct of regular meetings. I hope our two sides reach agreement on the issue."

As regards Tibet, the Prime Minister said, "The position taken by the Indian government constitutes a major support to China." However he expressed regret that the Dalai Lama had been engaging in political activities. Li Peng said, "Western countries have tried to use the issue of human rights, religion and indepenence of Tibet to apply pressure on China. The activities conducted by the Dalai Lama had exceeded the scope of religious activities. Even so, we respect him as a religious leader and are willing to talk to him about anything except the issue of the so-called independence of Tibet."

Referring to Pakistan, Li Peng said that he had, during his talks with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan, told him that the differences should be settled on the basis of the Simla agreement and U.N. resolutions and that he (the Chinese Prime Minister) would continue to convey the same.

Dealing with human rights the Prime Minister said that he shared India's universal respect for human rights but the issue should not be used to interfere in the internal affairs of another country. It should not be used as an excuse to deny international financial assistance.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

He concluded saying, "Both India and China have suffered from the attempts of the West to bully us. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries India was occupied through gunboat diplomacy. So was China. If you look at the human rights record of the West it is by no means better but worse than that of us."

The dinner that the Prime Minister hosted was a family get-together, Li Peng, his wife Zhou Lin, their daughter and grandchild and myself, my wife and two daughters participated. I was told that this kind of family dinner was seldom arranged for visiting dignitaries. The menu came as shock to my wife who is a very strict vegetarian. It was as follows:

Hors d'Oeuvres
Four Small Dishes
Consomme of "Bird's Nest"
Braised "Shark's Fin"
Vegetarian's Goose with Sauce
Curry Vegetarian's Chicken
Mushrooms and Asparagus
Ice Cream
Pastries
Fruits

The Prime Minister assured my wife that the entire menu was vegetarian and that the members of his family were also partaking of the vegetarian food. It was a nice gesture to the guests. Actually they were all pure vegetarian dishes dressed in non-vegetarian names. During the dinner, I told Zhou Lin that I hoped we had not starved them by foisting a vegetarian dinner on them but she replied that they too sometimes had vegetarian food for a change. We talked about Buddhism, culture and tourist spots. Li Peng said that in Shanghai they had set up a township with small industries to absorb local labour and increase employment and that I might find the

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

experiment interesting. We had a family group photograph after dinner. The Li Pengs bade us an affectionate farewell.

On the morning of May 20, there was a farewell call on President Yang Shangkun. The President told me that the Chinese side was greatly pleased with the official talks with our delegation and felt that the visit was another milestone in our friendly relations. He also issued a communique on the visit which ran as follows:

"The discussions between the two sides took place in an atmosphere of friendship and mutual understanding and covered a wide range of issues of bilateral, regional and global interest.

"Both sides recognised the importance of further developing and enhancing cooperation between India and China as the world's largest developing countries.

"Both sides agreed that the boundary question was complex and reiterated their firm resolve to settle the boundary question by peaceful negotiations. They noted that further concrete steps for building confidence measures between the countries were already under discussion.

"Both countries agreed that the use of force or threat to use of force as a means of settlement of disputes should be firmly abjured."

The farewell ceremony was colourful, children waving flags, the armed forces presenting a guard of honour and President Yang Shangkun affectionately and vigorously shaking hands for several minutes.

We left Beijing for Xian at 10.30 a.m., by a Chinese special Boeing 737 which was very elegantly and nicely furnished. Xian is the ancient capital of China, now one of its provinces. On arrival we were received by the Governor, officials and children with flowers.

The Xian Hotel where we stayed was reached after a 50-minute drive from the airport through a pleasant country-

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

side. The Governor told me that the road would be widened into a six-lane expressway.

We visited the ancient Wild Goose Pagoda. The Chief Abbot explained to us the meaning of the innumerable images of the Buddha and the history of the pagoda. We presented a bronze image of the Buddha, 90 cm (three feet) high. Set in the pagoda background it looked magnificent. The Chinese greatly admired it. Of the several images of monks we saw that of Hiuen Tsang who visited India in the 7th century A.D. and collected a lot of Buddhist literature which he took back to China. Many of these are stored in this pagoda.

From the pagoda we went to the Great Mosque. It was built in the same style as in Samarkand. The *imam* who received us proudly announced that the mosque was one thousand years old. We saw paintings of an old *imam* showing mosques in different countries where Islam had spread. There was one from India also. In the prayer hall we presented a fine carpet for use during prayers, a gift which the *imam* appreciated very much.

Xian has a fascinating museum of terracotta warriors. The legend about them is that when the Chinese emperors died, their armed forces were buried along with them. Later it was realised that it was inhuman to bury living soldiers along with the deceased monarch and so they made images of warriors in terracotta and buried them along with the dead king. Archaeological excavations at the site about 50 km from Xian had exposed this fantastic terracotta work of human forms in military attire standing row upon row in military formation. So far three vaults had been excavated, of which vault number one had been completed and the other two were at various stages of excavation. The archaeologist, Prof. Yan Zhong Yi, explained to us how the excavations were conducted and how the terracotta forms, which were very

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

brittle, were carefully placed in rows. He placed the age of these relics at 2000 B.C., that is, they were now four thousand years old.

In my younger days I had seen terracotta horses with riders arranged on two sides of village temples. We were told that the guardian deity of the village would march with the horsemen round the village warding off evil spirits. No one had cared for them as the Chinese had done. Terracotta art seems to have been universal in the whole of Asia in prehistoric times.

Then we moved to the Hall of Chariots. Here bronze chariots used by kings of yore were displayed. I asked the guide why were chariots made of bronze. He replied that in China, the bronze age preceded the iron age and hence the affluent monarchs built chariots of bronze.

Leaving Xian we arrived at the lake city of Hangzhou, where we stayed in the picturesque Hotel Shangrila overlooking a vast lake of enthralling scenic beauty. I sat in the sit-out watching the lake and the beauty of the thick foliage and flowers skirting it.

On May 21, the members of the delegation met and paid homage to Rajiv Gandhi on the first anniversary of his martyrdom. Some time later we received the news that the Chinese had exploded their biggest atomic bomb near the borders of India. Some members of the delegation regarded it as an insult to the Indian President and a message of threat to India. Others said that it was a signal to the USA that China had become a super power, capable of exploding a bomb of one megaton capacity. I felt that as a nation committed to a nuclear weapon-free world we should suitably express our views.

The same evening the Chinese Minister-in-waiting called on our delegation to express his condolences on the first anniversary of Rajiv Gandhi's demise. He made a short

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

speech conveying the condolences of his government and the people. In my reply I thanked the Chinese Government for the expression of their sentiment. I said that Rajiv Gandhi had proposed an action plan for complete elimination of nuclear weapons by 2000 A.D. and reiterated our goal of a "nuclear weapon-free and non-violent world". I am sure the Minister-in-waiting would have conveyed my statement to his government. The group of journalists present at this meeting felt that India's position regarding nuclear explosions had been appropriately presented.

After dinner with the Governor of Hangzhov, there was a delightful cultural show by dancers and acrobats. I was told that Li Peng was so impressed by the cultural show put on for him at Rashtrapati Bhavan that he insisted China should match it with its best. Chinese acrobats are among the best in the world. They performed a few breathtaking feats. Chinese dances are slow compared to the vigorous Bharatanatyam or Kathak but they had a charm of their own. I complimented the artists and presented flowers.

On the morning of May 22, we made a tour of the lovely lake. The lake which is six sq. km in area has a number of islands connected with each other by winding pathways. As we walked along we came to the lily pond with a lot of Chinese paper currency floating on it. China has metallic currency only for very small denominations and the rest is all paper currency. The Governor told me that there was a superstition that if one wished for something and threw money in the pond, the wish would be realised. Some members of the party threw Yuan notes and asked me also to follow suit. I told them that I had realised all my wishes in life and had nothing more to wish for. I have seen the biggest and deepest Baikal Lake in Siberia, several lakes in Switzerland and elsewhere. However the lake in Hangzhou had a special charm because the islands and the pathways gave one a

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

feeling that one was walking in the middle of the lake.

We were then taken to the tea village. The Shuang Feng village had 380 families and a population of 866. The entire 300 acres of land in the village was devoted to tea cultivation. The director of the tea farm was also in charge of the administration. There were three small units, a hotel, an automobile repair shop and a maintenance unit. Everyone in the village was employed in one or the other of these units. We saw tea plucking and manual drying of tea leaves. In India even small growers have now modern tea curing facilities. Ninety percent of the tea produced in the village was retained by it and 10 percent went to the State. The average annual wage per family was 6630 yuan or at the conversion rate of Rs 5.5 for one yuan, Rs 36,000 p.a. Education is free till nine years. During my talks with General Secretary Jiang Zemin and Prime Minister Li Peng, both referred to this type of rural employment China had provided. The experiment impressed me as it was more or less on the Gandhian model of rural development and employment.

From the tea village we proceeded to the famous Buddhist temple, Ling Yin, established by an Indian monk, Huili. Legend has it that the Indian monk said an immortal being was buried under the rocks and that he built a temple there. The place was picturesque and one Chinese dignitary accompanying us said monks always chose beauty spots to build their pagodas. Opposite the temple, there was a majestic peak. The guide told us that the Indian monk seeing the similarity between a peak in his country and this called it "a peak that flew from afar".

The master of the temple received us and showed a large number of images of the Buddha. In every pagoda we saw several images of the Buddha with a different countenance. The chief explained that the hall where we were was called "The Hall of Heavenly Kings". I was so lost in admiration of

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

the place that I missed much of the information that was volunteered about the place. Another hall named "Sakyamuni Hall," had a huge image of the Buddha about 18 metres (60 feet) high with excellent proportions. It was made of gold plated wood. We presented a bronze Buddha and made the customary offerings to the temple.

The same evening we were seen off by the Governor and Chinese officials to Shanghai, the last leg of our visit.

The flight from Hangzhou to Shanghai took only thirty minutes. After reception at the airport, we drove to Jin Jiang Tower Hotel. We stayed on the 37th floor in a huge double suite.

Around 5 p.m., we met the Indian students studying in Shanghai. They were quite happy with the living conditions and said they had no problems. The Chinese faculty members as well as students were friendly and cooperative, they added. We also met the two Chinese children, Yan Chengye and Gao Jianhong, who were our guests at Republic Day earlier in the year. Gao, who was very shy when she came to India, talked with animated fervour. When I mentioned this, Gao replied, "Now we are old friends." Quite smart for a girl of twelve.

Shanghai had been developed into a commercial city mainly by the British and a few other Western powers. It has a number of foreign trading houses and banks. I was told that the foreign banks could conduct only foreign exchange business and could not raise local deposits. The city is crowded and less clean than the other cities we had visited.

The Mayor of Shanghai was the most important dignitary invested with large powers over the city. The Governor of the province had less authority than the Mayor. On May 22, the day of our arrival, the Mayor hosted a dinner for our delegation. Fifteen persons were seated at the main table and barring four from our side, the rest were Chinese dignitaries.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

They served 14 courses of vegetarian dishes in small portions.

The Mayor talked about the rapid progress China had made in the last decade after the introduction of the policy of economic liberalisation. He was happy that the rural townships with local industries, which had developed recently, were proving such a success. He also mentioned that they were building a suspension bridge almost of the same length as the Howrah bridge in Calcutta.

On the morning of May 23, we went to the township at Zhoupu on the outskirts of Shanghai. It is a self-contained township like the tea village we visited in Hangzhou. The area is 20 sq. km and population 18,000. The people are engaged in agriculture and in small industries organised by the township itself. We were informed there were as many as 58 enterprises such as textiles, metallurgy, plastics, chemicals, etc. We visited a woollen textile factory which was a joint venture of the township and Hong Kong. The factory had very few workers and its products were of impressive quality.

The township runs a nursery school which we next visited. It was a very pleasant sight to see chubby Chinese children with round moon faces playing and enjoying themselves. I lifted a baby and carried her in my arms. The child was scrutinising my strange face but did not resent my picking her up. A number of other children came running to me, raising their little arms to be picked up. The nursery school was well equipped with all teaching aids and was comparable to any similar school in Western countries.

Shanghai is famous for its Jade Buddha, even as Bangkok is for the Emerald Buddha. The abbot received us and took us round the temple and showed us several big statues of the Buddha. We had to climb fifty steps to reach the floor where the Jade Buddha is installed. The abbot who was gasping

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

after the climb complimented me, saying very few visitors had gone up at one go without stopping for breath. The story goes that Abbot Wie Ken brought this Jade Buddha from Burma. It is an exquisite piece of art, perfect in proportions with an enchanting face carved out of a single piece of jade. One could see benevolence oozing out of the face. While jade is green, this stone was whitish green which added to the charm of the figure. We saw the image from several angles and took a lot of pictures. During the customary exchange of presents we presented a bronze Buddha to the temple.

On our way we saw the suspension bridge — Nanpu bridge — which was nearing completion. Chinese engineering skills were fully on display in this project.

We were scheduled to take off at 6 p.m. on May 23, and arrive in Delhi around 10 p.m. local time. We were informed that the Air-India Boeing, which was being towed to position ran into a ditch and the flight would be delayed. Later in the evening we were informed that another aircraft had been requisitioned as the one at the airport needed repairs.

The Chinese authorities expressed regret over the mishap and extended their hospitality till we took off the next morning.

The anti-Chinese lobby in India spread the canard that the Chinese had deliberately caused the incident and insulted the Indian guests. We arrived in Delhi on May 24.

In Beijing some members of my family, expressed a desire to do some shopping for presents for people at home. The Chinese staff must have imagined that we were one of those multi-millionaires and took us to their prestigious Friendship Store at 8 p.m. after closing hours.

Friendship Store is one of those famous department stores like Macy's in New York with several floors. We looked at some jade ornaments and images for which China is very famous. We were stunned by the prices which ran into

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

hundreds of dollars. When we enquired whether the stores catered only to foreign visitors, we were informed that quite a few Chinese families were rich and could afford such luxuries.

On my return I held a long discussion with the Prime Minister and apprised him of the mutual agreement to examine the suggestion for demilitarisation of the line of control, and the observance of the status quo on the border pending its final determination. The affirmation by the Chinese side not to resort to violence for the solution of the border issue was significant. The avoidance of close proximity confrontation by troops going back to new positions and the readiness to maintain mutual communication on forces' movement on either side, I said, were encouraging signals for the improvement of relations between the two countries. The Prime Minister appreciated the progress achieved in the talks and said he would take positive steps in that direction.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

44

Early in May I indicated to the security people that I intended to stay in my house in Kotturpuram in Madras. I started doing, at my cost, minor repairs to the house and giving it a new coat of paint. The security people felt that since the house was situated on the main road it did not satisfy security requirements. I remonstrated with them that I did not want cumbersome security arrangements and wanted to lead the carefree life of a citizen, going to concerts, the beach and other attractive engagements in Madras for which I had chosen to go back home. The wrangle went on for nearly a month and ultimately I had to yield or stay in Delhi. I did not like to stay in Delhi as I knew I would be pestered by people seeking recommendations to ministers and pouring tales and complaints to me against ministers and the party hierarchy. I felt that if I stayed in Delhi, it would not be a life in retirement. I therefore decided to accept my entitlement to government accommodation with all the security constraints on my movements.

I was invited to unveil a statue of the former President, Neelam Sanjiva Reddy, at his native place, Anantapur in Andhra Pradesh, on May 31. I have known Sanjiva Reddy since 1946 when he was a member of the Cabinet of then Madras Presidency consisting of Tamil Nadu, Andhra and parts of Karnataka and Kerala. He was a close associate of the

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Rantalab Jammu

legendary Tamil Nadu leader Kamaraj. They had many things in common — a rural background, sound common sense and a burning desire to serve the masses. The way they solved the boundary issue between the separated Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu is a striking example of mutual accommodation. Sanjiva Reddy is a man of the masses. He did not pretend to much intellectualism. Even when he was Speaker of the Lok Sabha he settled issues on the basis of fair play, rather than the rules of procedure. He had held all offices such as Chief Minister, Union Cabinet Minister, Speaker of the Lok Sabha, President of the Indian National Congress and finally President of India with great distinction.

He lived through tumultuous days, as during the bitter agitation for a separate Andhra State culminating in the martyrdom of Potti Sriramulu, and the Congress split in 1969. But he always maintained his equanimity, even when he lost the presidential election. I have known him as a warm friend, generous to a fault. I paid handsome tributes to his sacrifice, service and human qualities, and wished him many more years of healthy and happy life.

In May 1992, the Indian Council of Cultural Relations founded by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad did me the honour of inviting me to deliver the Azad Memorial Lecture. Eminent people like Jawaharlal Nehru, Arnold Toynbee, Lord Attlee and Sir C.V. Raman had earlier delivered the memorial lectures. I chose as the theme of my lecture " Maulana Azad and the unity of India."

In my address I called Maulana Azad "a legend in his own time" and said, "His contribution to the cause of national liberation is an indelible chapter in our national history. He became an inspiration that was at once intellectual and emotional." Tracing the Maulana's early career I recalled that "Azad had mastered the *Koran*, several

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Sutras and had acquired the fundamentals of Arabic. He had mastered by the age of 15 the body of Islamic education which is normally received about the age of 20. He soon gained an additional knowledge of Persian which, together with his fluency in Urdu, marked him out for an assured future in the world of scholarship."

Characterising Maulana Azad as an apostle of Hindu-Muslim unity I quoted from his writings wherein he had stated, "If an angel descends from the heavens today and proclaims that India can attain Swaraj within 24 hours provided I relinquish my demand for Hindu-Muslim unity, I shall retort to it, 'No, my friend, I shall give up Swaraj but not Hindu-Muslim unity'." I added that "he sought to enlist dedicated Muslims and through an agreement with the Hindus launched a joint struggle against the British."

Maulana Saheb opposed the pernicious two-nation theory enunciated by Mohammed Ali Jinnah and vehemently opposed the partition of India.

Referring to the growing militant movements in Punjab, Kashmir and some North-Eastern states I said that doubts had been raised whether India would be able to maintain its unity and integrity for long. But I added, "Looking back at the history of India, prehistoric to modern times, a keen observer will notice that the cultural unity of India has continued throughout its long history, despite several onslaughts from divisive forces."

At the same time I cautioned, "It is prudent to take note of the changing moods of the people of India as elsewhere. Man's urge for freedom reflects itself in several facets such as political institutions, economic regimen and social status. Hence the growing demand for greater devolution of power and authority to the states has to be taken note of and accommodated, if we are to hold in check the divisive forces in society. The Constitution of a country has to grow with the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

changing moods of the society and absorb the progressive trends so as to reflect the will of the people. I am sure that the central authority in India will respond to the wishes of the people and act betimes."

It may be recalled that for reasons of economy, I had cancelled my sojourn in Simla in 1991. Since I had a number of engagements in Himachal Pradesh I decided to stay for two weeks in Simla in 1992 from June 3 to June 17. On June 5, I went to Palampur in the Kangra Valley to participate in the Tea Festival organised by the Himachal Pradesh government. In addition to apples, oranges, apricots and other fruits, Himachal also produces good quality tea and the state government is taking a keen interest in tea cultivation. I spent two days in the enchanting Manali Valley and went up the Rohtang pass. On June 12, I addressed the I.A.S. probationers at the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration. In my speech I told them, " You are the agents of the Constitution and of law and nobody is above the law of the land. That being so, you have nothing to be afraid of, save and except the law of the land" and called on them to give advice objectively, without fear. I added that the constitutional guarantees accorded to the bureaucrats and civil servants in India provided more protection to them than in most countries in the world and therefore they should tread the straight path of impartiality and objectivity.

I pointed out to them that it was they who kept the administration going when the political leadership faltered or failed. Finally I appealed to them to take a constructive and positive attitude to people's needs and aspirations.

The Indian Military Academy at Dehra Dun is the premier defence institution of Asia which trains gentlemen cadets for commissions in the Indian Army. It also trains cadets from friendly foreign countries. Founded in 1932 the Academy's curriculum is designed for the fullest develop-

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

ment of the intellectual, moral and physical traits for leadership in the armed services.

Delivering the address at the Passing Out parade of 362 cadets of the Indian Military Academy (IMA), I said that the world today was passing through rapid changes and the practice of war had also undergone a sea change after the First and Second World Wars. I called on the armed forces to keep abreast of these changes so that they continued to be one of the best-trained armies in the world. I quoted from the inaugural address delivered to the cadets in 1932 which said, "The safety, honour and welfare of the country come first always and every time, and the honour, welfare and comfort of the men come last always and every time." I reminded them that this motto should be kept in mind throughout their life. The passing out ceremony was a very impressive one with all the grandeur and pageantry of the past.

On June 15, I addressed the troops near the Chinese border. The *jawans* were very happy to have their Supreme Commander among them in totally hostile climatic surroundings. I complimented the armed forces on shouldering the onerous task of defending India's frontiers in high altitudes, braving the vagaries of terrain and climate. I also said that the defence forces were a shining example of national integration and had a composite personality of people drawn from different parts of the country with different religions, languages, and tradition. Thus they represented the spirit of free India, diverse and yet united. I had tea with the *jawans* and spent some time with them which they enjoyed very much.

More than thirty years ago when I was Industries Minister in the then Madras state, I had persuaded Union Minister for Petroleum K.D. Malaviya to undertake a survey of the oil potential in the Cauvery basin. A team of explorers came to Thanjavur district of Tamil Nadu and did some test

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

boring but came to a negative conclusion. They met me in my office in the Madras Secretariat and told me that they could not strike oil in sufficient volume to venture on further prospecting. Since then exploration equipment and technology had advanced very much and the price of oil had risen from $5/6 to $30 a barrel. It has therefore become economical to exploit even small reserves.

The Government of India, after studying the viability of the Narimanam oilfield in Thanjavur district, decided to set up a small refinery of 0.5 million tonnes capacity. Madras Refineries Limited, which was implementing the project requested me to lay the foundation for the project on June 22. Amidst scenes of great enthusiasm of the people of Thanjavur the project was launched by me. This small refinery would meet the local needs for LPG, kerosene and diesel. It would also save the transport costs of taking the crude to Madras and the product back to Thanjavur. I am mentioning this specially to emphasise the value and importance of small projects instead of chasing all the time the mirage of multi-million capacity projects.

During the whole of May and June the stock exchanges were reeling under delirious speculation. Shares of the face value of Rs 100 had risen to Rs 11,000, totally unjustified either on their break-up or yield value. Speculators overtraded without scrips and sent the markets spiralling higher and higher. A set of fraudulent operators got accommodation from banks in violation of all normal banking practices. The inevitable crash came towards the third week of June and the whole fraud was uncovered. The Opposition called for the resignation of the Finance Minister and the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India.

When this mad speculation was running high I told the Prime Minister to arrest this rush by unloading the shares held by financial institutions so that speculators would leave

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

the field and genuine investors alone would stay in the market. Apparently this suggestion did not find favour with the government. Instead, the financial institutions also joined the speculative race. The Finance Ministry publicly took credit for the buoyancy of the stock market and called it an index of the success of the free market economy.

One of the companies that came under the scrutiny of the Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, Janakiraman, was Fairgrowth Financial Services, a company carrying on business as share brokers since 1991. The Minister of State for Commerce, P. Chidambaram, and his wife Nalini, a senior Advocate of the Madras High Court were sold, by those managing Fairgrowth, shares to the tune of Rs 1.5 lakhs, at the face value of Rs 10. These shares were not quoted in the stock exchange but were reported to fetch a high price in private trading. Chidambaram, in his letter to the Prime Minister, disclosed his holding in Fairgrowth and offered his resignation.

At 9 p.m. on July 9, my Secretary Murari informed me that the Prime Minister rang up and told him that the letter of resignation of Chidambaram was being forwarded for the President's acceptance. The letter actually came at 11.30 p.m. and the Rashtrapati Bhavan communique accepting the resignation "on the advice of the Prime Minister" was issued immediately.

No. 1 Willingdon Crescent which is part of the Rashtrapati Bhavan Estate had been under continuous occupation of ministers since independence. The last occupant was Devi Lal, Deputy Prime Minister. He had made several alterations and also housed a number of cattle in the premises. The house was originally the residence of Sir Edwin Lutyens, the famous designer of New Delhi and architect of Rashtrapati Bhavan. He had left a large number of plans and details of the construction of Rashtrapati Bhavan. There were also a

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College of Education, Bantalab Jammu

number of items of historic value such as the chairs used by King George V and Queen Mary, the priceless canopy of silk and gold and the carpet woven with silver strands by master weavers of Hyderabad. These could not be housed in the Museum in Rashtrapati Bhavan. So I converted No. 1 Willingdon Crescent into an exhibition and displayed not only these objects but a few more such as the model of the Pasupathinath temple in silver, gifted by the King of Nepal and number of other memorabilia. Sita Murari, wife of my Secretary Murari, worked day and night with the cooperation of the CPWD and the members of the museum committee and put the whole show in excellent shape.

Almost two years before the end of my tenure I had planned that the history of Rashtrapati Bhavan should be written and kept as a valuable record. I had entrusted the task to H.Y. Sharada Prasad, who was the Press Adviser to Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi, and is an excellent writer with a deep penetrating perception. I first planned it in the grandiose style of a coffee-table edition. But when I learnt that it would cost about Rs 30 lakhs I decided to go in for a prosaic edition which would cost not more than Rs 3 lakhs. Sharada Prasad did a marvellous piece of work and the book received rave reviews in the Press.

I formally inaugurated the exhibition on July 18. I was happy that Sharada Prasad, who had a nasty road accident and was hospitalised, recovered and was able to attend the function. Sharada Prasad's sense of duty was so great that despite his serious injuries he continued to work on the history of Rashtrapati Bhavan and produced it within time. My gratitude to him choked my words of thanks and made my eyes moist. I have rarely come across a man of such sterling qualities, competence, modesty, dedication to duty and transparent sincerity as Sharada Prasad.

Releasing the book at the function I said that I had always

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

wondered who was more important, the maker of history or the writer of history, and answered it by saying that the man who writes history was more important as without the writer, the man who makes history would not be known to the world. Similarly, Sharada Prasad had revived the memories of Lutyens and put his work permanently on record.

I was much impressed by Sita Murari's contribution to the organisation of the museum. I wrote in my own hand an appreciation of her invaluable contribution to the creation of a 'dream place' in Rashtrapati Bhavan. I also sent a warm letter of thanks to Sharada Prasad for the great service he had rendered to posterity.

It is customary for Presidents to do Bharat Darshan for a formal leave-taking before their retirement. Even as I did not follow the convention of visiting the states on assuming office, I did not follow the practice of taking leave also. Similarly, I advised Governors not to undertake journeys to Delhi for the purpose of bidding adieu.

I hosted a tea to members of the panel of honorary doctors to the President and also to the artists who had given cultural performances at Rashtrapati Bhavan. About 150 dancers and musicians participated in the tea.

The whole of July was hectic. The street children who had received our hospitality earlier came in large numbers to bid farewell to us. They also gave an entertaining demonstration of their skills in the forecourt of Rashtrapati Bhavan. Unending streams of callers took away most of the time. Former President Zail Singh in a unique gesture entertained our family to tea and invited top political leaders. The Prime Minister and his Cabinet colleagues hosted a lunch for us. In an unprecedented gesture the Chief Justice and Judges of the Supreme Court invited me to tea in their premises and spoke of the cordial relations I had maintained with the judiciary.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

During all this time I was regularly attending my office in Shanti Niketan and disposing of files attending to administrative matters.

At a solemn function held in the Central Hall of Parliament, members of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha gave a touching farewell. The farewell address which was read by Speaker Shivraj Patil traced my long public career and paid encomiums to me on my tenure as President. The address stated, "Never before in the history of the Indian Republic has the President been faced with so many crises and situations as you were called upon to tackle during your tenure. Although you had limited workable options on some unprecedented recent constitutional questions, your poised judgments helped to maintain the unity and integrity of the country at the crucial hours. We will remember you for your statesmanship, your humanity, your friendliness and winning informality — qualities which have endeared you to us, as to all sections of your people."

It was my invariable practice during the years I was President to read only written texts on all important occasions. I was afraid of being misquoted and I always saw to it that my text reached the Press well in advance. I am happy to say that the practice paid good dividends as there was not even a single occasion to enter into an argument with the Press regarding my utterances. On this occasion however, I decided to speak extempore from my heart and define the powers of the President.

In my address I said that during the five decades of my active political life I had always acted according to my conscience, irrespective of praise or abuse that followed. After recounting the progress India had made since Independence, I said that democratic planning had enabled the country not only to progress but also to protect the weaker and vulnerable sections of society and therefore the

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

planning process should be continued, notwithstanding changes in the economic policies. I said that there was no contradiction between free market economy and planning.

Defining the powers of the President in a parliamentary democracy, I compared it to an emergency lamp, which came into operation when power failed and became dormant when power was restored. I said that the responsibility for the administration of the country rested with the Prime Minister who carried the confidence of Parliament and the President was not an appellate or a supervisory authority over the Prime Minister and the Cabinet. If anything went wrong in the administration, the President could not be questioned, while the Prime Minister and his Cabinet could be challenged and thrown out. Therefore, the President should be dormant when the political power was effective. He could however return the Cabinet proposals for reconsideration if he noticed any infirmity in them. He could also, like the Crown in England, "advise, guide and warn" the Cabinet but should abide by the decision of the Council of Ministers.

Occasions do arise when the political power fails in the country and no party commands a majority in Parliament to provide a stable government. Similar situations arise also when the Prime Minister is defeated in the House or tenders his resignation. On such occasions the emergency lamp comes into operation and the President has to take the initiative for establishing a stable government, either with the help of the parties in the existing House or by forming a government through the democratic electoral process.

The President has also to oversee that a government which has resigned but has been asked to continue till alternative arrangements are made, observes the norms of not taking policy decisions during the interim period, committing future governments to heavy financial burden.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

I also hoped that some day research would be made on the events during the years 1989-1991 by scholars of constitutional law for ascertaining how far the provisions of the Constitution had been observed. I concluded by saying "I can say with confidence that I have maintained the spirit and letter of the Constitution." The members of Parliament presented an address, a plaque and a scroll containing the signatures of the members of both Houses. Knowing my habit of transferring my mementos to the *toshakhana*, the Speaker specifically asked me to retain it in my personal possession. I was deeply touched by their affection.

I came to Shanti Niketan office as usual at 10 a.m., on July 24, cleared the last file and swept the table clean. Then I visited the Museum, the *toshakhana*, the Marble Room and the Exhibition in No. 1 Willingdon Crescent. I felt proud of my additions to Rashtrapati Bhavan and left the premises after casting a longing, lingering look behind. In the evening I went round the garden and saw the growth of the cacti and luscious bananas. I went to the deer park and the rabbits pen as if to take leave of them.

My address to the nation was broadcast at 8.15 p.m. It contained the usual thanks-giving and homilies about peace, brotherhood and cooperation.

On July 25, the routine regarding the swearing-in ceremony of the new President was gone through. Then after inspecting an Inter-Services Guard of Honour and taking leave of the dignitaries, I emplaned for Madras. I suddenly felt a sense of relief and a strong urge to go to sleep.

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

EPILOGUE

By writing this volume I have 're-lived' my years as President of India. Surprisingly I have few regrets on any one of my actions during all the tumultuous years of political uncertainties. Were I to face the same situations again, I would not act differently from the way I did.

During these five years, political parties did not rise to the occasion on two issues. I suggested to Muslim members of Parliament who met me on October 25, 1991 and later to Atal Behari Vajpayee and some BJP leaders that the monument Ram Janma Bhoomi / Babri Masjid may be *shared by both the communities*. I said that out of the three towers which constituted the monument, the central tower where the Ram idols were located and the right tower might be given to the Hindu organisations and the left tower may be protected by government under the Ancient Monuments Preservation Act and maintained as a historical place and that a concrete wall separating the two could be put up to avoid any clashes. The response individually was not unfavourable from both sides but they could not commit their respective organisations.

I had passed on this idea off and on to many leaders including the Prime Ministers. I asked Justice H.R. Khanna, retired Judge of the supreme Court who agreed with my suggestion, to see if support for it could be secured from leaders and gave him also the plan of the monument. Justice Khanna told me later that the idea did not evoke response from the groups he consulted. Even after retirement, when Swamy Chinmayanand M.P. (BJP-UP) and *sadhu* leader came to discuss the issue with His Holiness Jayendra Saraswati Sankaracharya of Kanchi, in 1992, I suggested this

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

solution to them. They said they would consult other leaders. However, nothing came out of these feeble attempts.

The demolition of the Masjid on December 6, 1992, is a shame on our ancient culture and has driven a wedge between the two major communities in India. The present generation cannot escape the charge of having failed the nation on this issue. Indian history has no record of a Hindu ever destroying a religious place either of his own or of any other faith.

Likewise when the nation was faced with grave financial crisis and also political instability, I appealed to the political parties to come together and form a national government to tide over the situation. I recalled to them that when England was faced with a grave exchange crisis and went off the 'Gold Standard' in 1930, the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Parties came together and formed a national government and faced manfully the national crisis and that the situation in India was identical with that in Britain in 1930. Self-interest of political parties prevailed over national interests and they, like the proverbial lawyer with a bad case, "abused the opposite attorney". History will judge us some day.

Despite all these, I firmly believe that a country which had survived thousands of years will be able to tumble through its problems and once again regain its past glory. The question one should ask oneself is, "Are we contributing to that resurgence?"

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

INDEX

Abbot Wie Ken, 639
Abdullah, Farooq, 77, 282, 498
Abdul Ghaffar Khan, 39, 40, 45, 46, 48, 476, 477
Abdul Ghani Khan, 340
Abdul Kalam, 344
Abdul Samad, 471, 486
Ackerman, 594, 599
Adami, Fienech, of Malta, 376, 378
Adi Sankara, 77, 78, 101, 154, 155
Adoor Gopala Krishnan, 159
Advanced Missile Technology Centre, Hyderabad, 196
Advani, L.K., 110, 425, 426, 429, 436, 438, 439, 450, 462, 482, 484, 486, 532
Afghanistan, 159, 176, 178, 181, 190, 289, 308
Africa Fund, 284, 286, 289, 422
African National Congress, 289, 290, 367, 423
Agarwal, Rajendranath, 241
"Agni" missile, 280
AIADMK, 131, 135, 136, 137, 320, 440, 443, 463, 464, 465, 568
Ajaib Singh, Jathedar, 117
Akademi Fellowship, 255
Akaev, Askar, 613, 614
Akali government, 141
Akihito, Emperor, 41, 262, 447, 448
Alageson, D.V., 567
Ali Akbar Khan, 256
Aligarh Muslim University, 93, 124
Alexander, P.C., 71, 160, 197, 387, 542, 543, 552
Allahabad High Court, 380, 593
All Assam Students' Union, 107
Amrindra Singh, Capt., 106
Amarnath, 77
Ambattur, 162
Ambedkar, B.R., 296, 380, 458, 617
Amethi Lok Sabha Constituency, 313, 314
Ananthapur, 641
Amit Singh, 386, 390
Amjad Ali Khan, 34
Amman, 399, 400
Amirthalingam, 33
Anand, Viswanathan, 122, 149
Anand Shankar, 183
Ananthasayanam Ayyangar, 72
Ananthaswamy, 137
Andaman Island, 129
Andhra Pradesh, 5, 129, 152, 153, 198, 314, 579
Andhra Pradesh High Court, 97, 108, 241
Anerood, Jagnauth, 344
Annamalai University, 156
Ansari, Z.A., 126
Ansari, Z.R., 195
Anti-Defection Law, 458, 488, 517, 590, 600
Antony, A.K., 400
Antulay's case, 278
Arakkonam, 613
Archana, 159
Arif Mohammad Khan, 390, 392, 394, 396, 407, 473
Arjun (Battle tanks), 71, 106, 132
Arjun Awardee's Association, 172, 173
Armed Forces Flag Day, 120
Arora, Gopi, 37
Artillery Central Brass Band, 117

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Arunachalam, V.S., 71
Arunachal Pradesh, 156, 587
Arvind Lalbhai, 49
ASEAN, 519
Asha Bhonsle, 184
Ashoka Hall, 24, 31, 54, 63, 103, 126, 444, 451, 452, 587, 588, 611
Asian Development Bank, 60, 524
Asian Games, 103
Asian Track & Field Meet, 316
Assam, 497, 498, 499, 501, 502
Assam accord, 107
Assam–Arunachal border problem, 157
Atomic Energy Agency, 75
Attorney General, Ramaswamy, 38, 81, 458, 494, 497
Aurobindo, Sri, 281
Ayodhya, 315, 425, 426, 427, 429, 432, 436, 439, 484
Ayodhya Temple, 425, 563
Azharuddin, Mohammed, 149
Azmi, Shabana, 149
Babar, 187, 425
Babri Masjid, 315
Babri Masjid Action Committee, 426
Ba Dinh Hall, 511
Badshah Khan *see* Abdul Ghaffar Khan
Bahujan Samaj Party, 443
Baikal lake, 189, 635
Balakrishnan, S., 485
Balakrishnan, Justice Eradi, 588
Balasore, Firing range, 82
Banatwala, 486
Banerjee, Mamta, 554
Bangarappa, 421
Bangladesh, 102, 103, 195, 355
Bangladesh crisis, 89
Barari, H.A., 140
Bardoloi, Gopinath, 493
Barnala, Surjeet Singh, 101, 102, 141, 470
Basu, Chitta, 439
Basu, Jyoti, 103, 172, 325, 533, 536, 606
Batmunukh, (President Mangolia), 189, 190, 191
Beating Retreat Ceremony, 120, 132, 340
Bedi, Bishan Singh, 173, 316
Begum Hasina, 539
Begum Khalida Zia, 539
Beijing, 619, 623, 624, 632
Benami transactions, 163
Benazir Bhutto, 304, 477
Besant, Annie, 160
Bhagat, B.R., 63
Bhagat, H.K.L., 159, 195, 472
Bhagavad Gita, 184, 607
Bhagwati, P.N., 434, 440, 456
Bhajan Lal, 82
Bhandari, Nar Bahadur, 122
Bharat Bhavan, 113
Bharati, Subramania, 17, 35, 184, 281, 401
Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 127
Bharatiya Janata Party, 9, 152, 315, 317, 320, 324, 382, 403, 408, 425, 427, 428, 429, 430, 434, 435, 438, 443, 462, 476
Bharat Ratna, 39, 40, 46, 148, 149, 380, 476, 477, 550, 600, 601
Bharat Scout and Guides, 43
Bhargava, Thakurdas, 73
Bhatia, Prem, 170, 489
Bhatnagar, 25, 67
Bhave, Vinoba, 150
Bhopal Gas Tragedy, 111
Bhutan, 103, 118
Bibi Khanum, 187, 188
Bihar, 140, 317, 329, 426, 470, 497, 502
——, govt., 428
Birla Chandrakant, 161
Birla, G.D., 161
Bishop Cotton School, Simla, 168
Bismillah Khan, 255
Blitz, 152

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Blue book regulations, 94
Boat Club, Delhi, 199, 401
Bofors, 2, 5, 40, 65, 66, 68, 71, 80, 81, 116, 172, 296
Bofors Gun deal, 297, 312
Bofors Howitzer Guns, 132, 296
Bolaram, Hyderabad, 300
Bombay High Court, 279
Bommai, S.R., 298, 390, 392, 434, 435, 465, 467
Bommai Ministry, 420
Border Roads Organisation, 167
Bose, Subhas Chandra, 129, 601
Botswana, 2
Brandt, Willy, 97
Brindavan Gardens, 415
British Raj, 20
Brockway, Fenner, 97
Brundtland, Harlem, 411
Buckingham Palace, 363, 364, 365, 367, 368
Buddha, 55, 191, 636, 637
Buddha-dharma darshan, 256
Buddhist literature, 256
Burgomaster of Amstredam, 205
Burney, S.M.H., 88
Bush, George, 263
Buta Singh, 11, 134, 138, 171, 200, 316, 467
Byron, 365
Byzantine Museum, 219

Calicut University, 250
Calcutta, 328
Cathedral Medina, 378
Catherine Hall, 176
Cauvery-Mettur Canal system, 156
Cavery river water dispute, 561-575
Cavery water issue, 569
Cavalry Regiment, 498
Cellular Jail, 129
Central Asian Republics, 189
Central Hall of Parliament, 13, 15, 44, 67, 69, 102, 201, 444
Central Jail, Vellore, 198
Central Reserve Police Force, 382, 384, 429, 599
Chakma refugees, 448
Chakravarty, Nikhil, 195, 344, 537, 619
Chamundeswari Temple, 414, 416
Chandigarh, 495
Chandi mandir, 169
Chandra Shekhar, 2, 128, 413, 431, 432, 435, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 445, 450, 452, 453, 455, 459, 462, 465, 467, 472, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 484, 486, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 500, 504, 505, 506, 525, 526, 527, 531, 543, 550, 551, 555, 558, 559, 560, 590
Chandra Shekhar's Gulf policy, 474
Chandraswami, 123
Chandy, (Governor), 111, 112
Charan Singh, 326, 437
Chatterji, Somnath, 69, 242, 440
Chautala, Om Prakash, 385, 386, 390, 391, 392, 480, 494, 496, 616
Chavan, S.B., 75, 95, 152, 599
Chidambaram, P., 9, 152, 647
Chief Election Commissioner, 334, 497, 498, 499, 527
Chief Justice of India, 315, 327, 389
Chief of Naval Staff, 454
Chilenje House, 288
Chile, 573, 575
China, 74, 118, 166, 212, 224, 225, 232, 245, 254, 262, 263, 280, 305, 308, 371, 508, 512, 620, 621, 622, 624, 626, 628, 631, 633, 634, 638
Chirgaon, 35
Chitale, Dr., 319, 483
Choudhary, Amar Singh, 154
Choudhari, Valmiki, 124
Civil Disobedience movement, 151

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Clarence House, 365
Claridges Hotel, 374
Colombo, 27, 58, 298
Communist Party of India, 152, 320, 382, 431, 439, 454, 462
Communist Party of Vietnam, 257
Conable, 92, 93
Congress, 1, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 33, 40, 109, 152, 320, 321, 324, 332, 434, 438, 440, 442, 459, 463, 470, 472, 474, 475, 478, 481, 498, 596
Congress Parliamentary Board, 3, 48, 322, 552
Congress Party, 194, 406, 418, 419, 437, 455, 472, 473
Conservative Party, 375
Consolidated Fund of India, 486, 487
Constituent Assembly, 42, 43, 106, 128, 494
Constitution Amendment Bill, 142, 144, 416
Coppola, Francis Ford, 105
Crimsson, R., 103
Czechoslovakia, 292

Dadasaheb Phalke Award, 158, 192
Dalai Lama, 74, 166, 621, 629, 630
Dandavate, Madhu, 69, 144, 195, 414, 465
Dandi march, 153, 154
Dangi. 386
Dar-es-Salam, 291, 294
Darjeeling, 108, 123
Deepavali, 83, 84
Defamation Bill, 194-203
Defence Investiture Ceremony, 153
Defence Research & Development Organization, 196
De Klark, 288, 294, 422
Delhi declaration, 178, 181, 541
Delhi University, 75, 76, 404
Desai, Hitendra, 63, 66, 140
Desai, Kanti, 477
Desai, Morarji, 127, 151, 326, 372, 476, 477
Desai, S.K., 388
Deshbandhu College, 412
Deshmukh, B.G., 318, 320, 395, 396
Devi Lal, 9, 82, 324, 325, 326, 335, 385, 388, 391, 394, 395, 396, 398, 401, 445, 450, 471, 473, 488, 557
Dhaman Village, 154
Dharamshala, 166
Dharia, Mohan, 396
Dhillon, G.S., 71, 139
Diario de Noticias, 362
Diwakar, R.R., 106, 127
Dixit, J.N., 27, 60, 619
Dixit, Sheila, 81, 296
Dixit, Umashankar, 80, 256
DMK, 33, 323, 388, 454, 462, 463, 464, 465
DMK Government, 462
DMK Ministry, 465, 466, 467
Doordarshan, 195, 326
Dua, H.K., 537, 619
Dube, Bindeshwari, 139
Duke of Edinburg, 374
Duke of Gloucester, 372, 374
Duke of Kent, 363, 364
Durbar Hall, Rashtrapati Bhavan, 13, 24, 45, 54, 55, 62, 63, 148, 329, 477
Dussehra, 414, 415, 418
Dussehra festival, Mysore, 415
Dwaraka, 154

East India Company, 372, 373
East-West relationship, 304
Edelstam, 81
Edwardian Hall, 374
Egypt, 307
Election Commission, 16, 312, 313, 314, 317, 334, 385, 500, 501, 502, 526, 527, 533, 559

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Election Commissioner, 333, 334
El-Zayyat, 103
Emergency, 89, 90, 142, 143, 144, 145
Ershad, 447, 448
Ethiopia, 115
European Community, 306, 355
European Economic Community, 208, 371

Fairgrowth Financial Services, 647
Fakkruddin Ali Ahmad, 471
Farooq, Moulvi, 382, 384
Federal Republic of Germany, 302, 307, 309
Fernandes, George, 328, 381, 383, 435, 457
Fernandes, Remo, 184
FICCI, 217
Fiji, 519, 524
Festival of France in India, 258
Festival of India in France, 259
Festival of India in Russia, 34, 116, 180, 184, 192
Festival of Soviet Union in India, 188
Five Year Plans, 308
Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA), 68, 98
Fotedar, M.L., 3, 19, 37, 55, 67, 141, 200
France, 82, 280
Frankfurt, 309
Free Democratic Party, 305, 469
Fund Bank, 92
Fund Bank meetings, 60, 578

Gandhi, Gopal, 25, 67, 126, 175
Gandhi, Indira; 31, 34, 58, 70, 71, 80, 81, 82, 86, 89, 97, 100, 101, 102, 111, 127, 179, 244, 249, 264, 274, 313, 340, 372, 387, 396, 411, 418, 538, 552, 648; — assassination, 528, 532
Gandhi Kutir, 150
Gandhi, Mahatma, 2, 12, 13, 16, 17, 45, 76, 121, 131, 151, 153, 155, 160, 180, 181, 184, 185, 198, 214, 215, 219, 286, 291, 313, 422, 423, 614
Gandhi, Priyanka, 23, 74, 570
Gandhi, Rahul, 23, 74, 540, 570
Gandhi, Rajiv; 2, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 19, 23, 27, 28, 29, 30, 33, 35, 39, 40, 42, 44, 46, 54, 58, 59, 61, 63, 65, 66, 67, 68, 73, 79, 80, 83, 85, 89, 91, 95, 100, 104, 107, 108, 110, 121, 123, 128, 130, 131, 134, 137, 138, 139, 140, 142, 144, 148, 157, 163, 170, 171, 174, 175, 181, 182, 183, 184, 196, 201, 211, 217, 222, 224, 229, 230, 238, 242, 244, 245, 251, 253, 254, 257, 262, 267, 277, 289, 296, 297, 298, 313, 375, 382, 405, 407, 408, 418, 419, 420, 430, 436, 437, 438, 441, 442, 459, 460, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 478, 479, 480, 482, 487, 488, 489, 492, 493, 530, 531, 538, 540, 541, 542, 543, 550, 553, 595, 634, 635, 648
—— visit to China, 595, 618
—— assassination, 532, 534, 570
Gandhi, Rajmohan, 313
Gandhi, Ramchandra, 314
Gandhi, Sonia, 23, 30, 37, 62, 63, 73, 528, 529, 530, 547, 550, 570, 571
'Ganga-Volga milan', 184
Garcia de la Lama, Madam, 39
Gavaskar, Sunil, 316
Geneva agreement, 176, 181, 190, 245, 261, 289, 290
Genscher, 307
German Democratic Republic (GDR), 99, 105, 302, 304, 307
Germany, 97, 291, 306, 308, 309
Ghising, Subhash, 172
Giri, V.V., 22, 231
Glasnost, 181
Goan Gold, 362, 448

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Collection Bantalab Jammu

Golconda Fort, 300
Golden Temple, Amritsar, 171
Gonsalves, Alfred, 204, 258, 282
Goodall, Sir David, 364, 374
Gorbachev, 97, 116, 174, 177, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 192, 227, 242, 245, 246, 304, 370, 539
Gorkhaland agitation, 123
Gorkha National Liberation Front, 108, 172
Goswami, Dinesh, 324, 334, 353, 419, 465
Goswami, Rajiv, 410
Governor's Conference, 54, 86-90
Green Brigade, 385
Gromyko, 175, 176, 177, 178, 180, 183, 185
Guild Hall, 372
Guindy, 162
Gujarat, 317, 328
Gujral, I.K., 400
Gulf Crisis, 411, 468
Gulf policy, 474
Gulf War, 399, 413, 469, 471, 617
Gundu Rao, 400
Guntur, 129
Gupt, Maithlisharan, 17, 35, 36
Gupta, Indrajit, 69, 439, 462
Guru Nanak bhajans, 126
Guru Nanak's birthday, 238

Halsbury's Law of England, 485
Haneastic League of Cities, 309
Harage Qim Temple, 378
Harare, 283, 284, 285
Har Swaroop Singh, 454
Haryana elections, 9
HDW, 5
Hegde, Rama Krishna, 5, 328, 386
'Hermitage' The museum, 186
Hero's Acre, 285
Hessen, 309
Hidayatullah, 296, 521
Himachal Pradesh, 317, 644
Himachal Tourist Development Corporation, 165, 167
Himmatsingka, 106
Hindu, The, 138, 172, 200
Hindu Code Bill, 99, 240
Hindu Mahasabha, 430
Hirohito, of Japan, 302, 353
Hokishe Sema, 194
Holi, 148
Hong Kong Indians, 371, 372
Howe, Sir Geoffrey, 196, 370
Hurd, Douglas, 370, 371
Hyderabad, 462
Hyder, Salman, 619, 620

Imelda's shoes, 520
INF Treaty, 220, 243
INS Pondicherry, 260
INS Rajali, 613
INS Ranjeet, 260
Independence Day address, 194, 299, 400, 578
India Hicks, 96
India International Centre, 93, 94
Indian Council for Cultural Relation (ICCR), 34, 75, 642
Indian Cultural Centre, Moscow; Tashkent, 177
Indian Engineering Exhibition, 179, 180
Indian Express, 4
Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Simla, 169
Indian Military Academy, 644, 645
Indian National Army, 129
Indian National Congress, 179, 642
Indian Navy, 433
Indian Ocean Commission, 311
Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF), 15, 27, 28, 61, 125, 131, 153, 298, 465
Indian Post Office Amendment Bill, 110
Indira Gandhi Award for Peace, 103, 411

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Indira Gandhi Memorial, 89
Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, 242, 243, 410, 611
Indo-Arab relations, 353
Indo-German bilateral assistance, 468
Indo-Nepal friendship, 107, 303
Indo-Pak relations, 304
Indo-Portuguese Treaty, 353
Indo-Soviet Cooperation, 178
Indo-Soviet treaty of friendship, 178
Indo-Sri Lanka accord, 57, 58
Indo-Sri Lanka agreement, 30, 60, 148, 298
Indo-Sri Lanka Economic Cooperation, 60
Industrial Estate of Ambattur, 162
Intelligence Bureau, 122, 463
Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF), 177, 304
International Balloon Mela, 100
International Monetary Fund (IMF), 196, 284, 510, 547, 548
—— assistance, 570, 577, 578
—— loan, 555, 556, 573
International Youth Pioneer Camp, 190
Inter-Services Guard of Honour, 17
Iran, 49, 115
Iraq, 49, 115
Ireland, 103
Ishaq Khan, 196
Izvestia, 185

Jacob, M.M., 152
Jagmohan, 77, 79, 339, 340, 348, 381, 382, 383
Jain, L.C., 453
Jakhar, Balaram, 496
Jalan, Bimal, 76
Jamia Millia, 126
Jammu & Kashmir, 77, 336, 397, 499, 612
Janata government, 141
Janata Dal, 100, 320, 325, 350, 385, 390, 391, 406, 407, 408, 431, 432, 434, 435, 436, 438, 439, 445, 454, 470, 487, 488, 496, 533, 544, 559, 562
Janata Dal (S), 488
Janata Dal Government, 277, 392, 395, 436, 466
Janata Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), 27
Jantar Mantar, 188
Japan, 447
Jatti, B.D., 463
Jayakar, Pupul, 34
Jayalalitha, 133, 134, 135, 137, 526, 568
Jayaprakash Narayan, 396
Jaya Vilas Palace Hotel, 415
Jayewardane, 27, 28, 29, 30, 57, 58, 60, 125, 130, 131, 137, 298
Jethmalani, Ram, 80, 236, 237, 323
Jha, Bhagwat 'Azad', 61
Joint Parliamentary Committee, 23, 80
Joshi, Harideo, 118
Joshi, Kumudben, 72, 96, 127, 241
Junagadh state, 154
Justice Desai, 389

Kabde, Venkatesh, 493, 494
Kabir, 400
Kaifu, Prime Minister of Japan, 449
Kalakshetra, 42, 160, 624
Kalamkari paintings, 124
Kalidasa, 184
Kalka-Simla Railway, 165
Kamalahasan, 105, 159
Kamath, H.V., 72
Kamarja, K., 1, 79, 109, 139, 148, 151, 155, 179, 642
Kanha National Park, 113
Kapoor, Prithviraj, 159
Kapoor, Raj, 158, 159, 192

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Karanjia, Russi, 151, 152
Karnataka, 5, 65, 140, 272, 418
Karnataka High Court, 298, 299, 325
Karunakaran, K., 320, 321, 464, 540
Karunanidhi, 278, 279, 301, 323, 388, 464
Kashmir, 77, 78, 83, 168, 177, 182, 206, 228, 340, 341, 347, 348, 369, 376, 377, 381, 382, 384, 385, 386, 387, 397, 464, 465, 472, 497, 498, 524, 573
Kashyap, Subhash, 399, 487
Kathmandu, 94
Katju, Kailashnath, 381, 458
Katjus, 78
Katre, Marshall, 453
Katyal, K.K., 619
Kaunda of Zambia, 265, 287, 288, 289, 290
Kaul, P.K., 388
Kaul, T.N., 116, 174, 490
Kazakhstan, 176, 610, 624
Kehar Singh, 236, 240, 247, 249
Keith, Berridale, 314
Kerala, 65, 108, 317
Kerala High Court, 270, 389
Khalistan, 363, 408
Khanna, Justice, 444
Khapade, Saroj, 92
Khera, the BHEL official, 350
Khomeini, 285
Khurana, Madan Lal, 410
Khurana, S.L., 127, 134, 135, 137, 138
Khurshid Alam Khan, 126, 350
Khushwant Singh, 111
Kidwai, A.R., 93, 124
Kidwai, Mohsina, 92
Kilimanjaro, Mount, 294
King Edward, 365
King George VI, 365
King of Bhutan, 117, 118, 450, 538
King of Jordan, 323
Kinnock, Neil, 367, 371, 452
Koivisto, 303
Kohl, Helmut, 303
Kremlin, 176
Kremlin armoury, 179
Kremlin Hall, 177
Krishna Iyer, V.R., 4, 9, 10, 525
Krishna Kant, 350
Krishna Menon, 175, 228
Krishnamurti, J., 161
Krishnamurti Memorial Lecture, 161
Krishnan, T.N., 62
Krishna Rao, K.V., Gen., 194, 336, 338, 339
Krishna river, 129, 156
Krishnaraja Sagar dam, 415
Kumaramangalam, Rangarajan, 67, 457, 473, 566, 620
Kumaraswami Sastri, 197
Kumar Gandharva, 344
Kuomintang regime, 74
Kuriakose, Chavara Elias, 125

Labour Party, U.K., 319, 359
Ladakh, 349
Ladakhis, 78
Lakshadweep, 134
Lakshmi Singh, Sardar, 43
Laldenga, 63, 64, 202
Lalit Mansingh, 34
Latif, I.H., 4
Left Front, 443, 448, 469
Leh, 168
Leningrad, 75, 185, 186
Lenin Mausoleum, 179, 509
Liberals, 319
Ling Yin, 636
Lion sanctuary, 154
Li Peng, 618, 627, 629, 630, 631, 632, 636
Li Peng's visit to India, 592-597
Lisbon, 353, 356, 357, 358, 363
Lithuania, 354, 370, 371
Lohia, Ram Manohar, 546

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Lok Sabha, 6, 15, 16, 38, 145, 297, 326, 390, 401, 416, 425, 427, 428, 430, 434, 435, 440, 441, 442, 444, 450, 457, 478, 479, 480, 481, 484, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 494, 497, 499, 501, 553
LTTE, 33, 38, 60, 61, 95, 121, 125, 130, 143, 464, 465
Lubberes, Ruud, 85
Lu Beck, 309
Lucknow High Court, 315
Lusaka, 291
Lutyens, Edwin Landseer, 20, 62, 132, 648

M.G.R. Medical University, 300
Madam Jung, 624
Madhavan Kutty, V.K., 619
Madhya Pradesh, 317
Madras Advocates Association, 301
Madras High Court, 197
Madras Presidency, 108, 410
Madras Refineries Limited, 646
Madras Sappers & Minerals, Bangalore, 351
Madurai, 155
Madurai Kamaraj University, 155
Mahabalipuram rock temples, 124
Mahabharata, 167, 187, 258
Mahadevi Verma, 149
Mahanta, Prafulla, 107, 111
Maharaja of Patiala, 167
Maharashtra, 75, 120, 140, 152, 157, 388
Maharashtra High Court, 388
Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences, 150
Mahila Sabha, 96
Mahmud of Gazni, 425
Malai Mandir, 119
Malaviya, Satya Prakash, 457, 493, 494, 505
Maldives, 103, 304, 412, 433, 449, 450
Malhotra, Inder, 72, 619
Malik, Satpal, 392
Mallikarjun Mansur, 113
Malta, 353, 376, 377, 378, 379
Manali, 167
Mandal, Dhaniklal, 350, 411, 495, 496
Mandal Agitation, 438, 484
Mandal Commission, 261, 398, 401, 403, 409
Mandal Commission Report, 405, 406, 410, 424, 440
Mandela, Nelson, 289, 290, 293, 366, 367, 421, 422, 424, 426
Mandir Construction, 440
Mandir frenzy, 438
Mandir-Masjid Complex, 429
Mani Bhawan, 151
Manipur, 69, 70, 194
Manjunath, 159
Manmohan Singh, 316, 554, 555, 557, 569, 570, 571, 572
Mann, Simranjit Singh, 313
Mao Zedong, 253
Margatham Chandrasekhar, 4
Margaret Alva, 346
Mary Queen of Scotts, 365
Mathur, Shiv Charan, 118, 154, 229
Mauritius, 69, 608
Mayor of Bonn, 305
Meham Constitnancy, 385, 390
Meham poll, 386
Mehta, Usha, 151
Meitis, 70
Menon, M.G.K., 330
Menon, K.P.S., 27, 32, 175, 183
Mettupalayan–Ooty Mountain Railway, 165
MIG-29, 81, 82
Miguel de La Madrid, 39
Milkha Singh, 317
Mirage 2000, 82
Mirdha, Nathu Ram, 328
Mirza Ismail, 415

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Mishra, Mandana, 78
Mithilesh Kumar, 9, 10
Mizoram, 63, 64, 83, 202
Mohamed, M.H., 59
Mohammed, Syed, 66
Mohammed Usman Arif, 35
Mohammed Yunus, 4
Moily, 416
Monument of the Heroic Defenders, Leningrad, 185
Moscow, 340
Moscow University, 180
Mother Teresa, 328
Moulvi Farooq, 340
Mountbatten, 96
Mozambique, 283, 293, 358
Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, 328, 329, 335, 240, 349, 388, 464
Mugabe, Robert, 85, 283, 284, 285, 286
Mughal Gardens, 21, 26, 47, 74, 96, 105, 119, 129, 364, 468
Mujahideen, 177
Mukherji, Nirmal, 382, 388
Mukherji, Pranab, 474, 475
Mukherji, Sabyasachi, 330, 393, 414
Mulrooney, Brian, 85
Munich, 309, 311
Munshi, K.M., 127
Murari, P., 395, 455
Murasoli Maran, 270
Muthuswami Iyer, T., 197
Mwinyi, 291, 292, 293, 294

N.P.T. conditions, 75
Nachiarkoil, 124
Nadkarni, Admiral, 105, 117, 453
Nagaland, 83, 194, 202, 416, 616
Najibullah, 159, 160
Nakasone, 85
Namibia, 284, 286, 292, 450, 610, 611
Nanda, Gulzarilal, 477
Narasimha Rao, P.V., 4, 8, 11, 40, 41, 69, 123, 128, 134, 144, 195, 253, 263, 321, 347, 349, 480, 501, 535, 540, 551, 558, 564, 596, 601, 620, 627
Narayanan, K.R., 175, 400, 490, 607
Nariman, Lawyer, 483, 485
Narkanda, 166
Naruhito, Prince, 41, 449
Natal Indian Congress, 423
Nathdwara temple, 171, 228, 229
National Awards, 123
National Assembly, 360
National Conference, 320
National Film Awards, 158
National Front, 320, 323, 325, 386, 388, 390, 421, 428
National Front Government, 331, 332, 351, 384, 425, 427, 428, 434, 442
National Front Leaders, 328, 466
National Government, 323, 389
National Integration Council, 410
National Museum, Delhi, 62
National Security Act, 427
National Security Guards, 411
NATO, 354, 356
Natwar Singh, 121, 195, 253, 554
Nawaz Sharif, 477, 539
Nayakan, 105
Nayar, Kuldip, 372
Nayar, Sushila, 150
Ndola, 290
Nedunchezhian, V.R., 34, 127, 133, 134, 136, 137
Nehanga Copper Mines, 290
Nehru, Arun, 66, 67, 69, 108, 328, 390, 391, 392, 394, 396, 398, 406, 472, 473
Nehru, Balwant Kumar, 122
Nehru, Braj Kumar, 122
Nehru, Jawaharlal, 1, 19, 44, 79, 98, 99, 100, 109, 110, 113, 165, 167, 201, 202, 232, 240, 244, 256, 257, 282, 305, 307, 367, 372, 507, 512, 554, 621, 628

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Nehru, Motilal, 381, 458
Nehru, Rameshwari, 121, 122
Nehru, Award, 97, 116, 352
Nehru Centenary celebrations, 116
Nehrus, 78
Nepal, 107, 122, 303, 304, 355, 398
Nepalese Parliamentary Delegation, 107
Neyveli, 99, 306
Niagara Falls, 285
Nicosia, 216, 218
Nijalingappa, 106
Ninaj Aquino airport, 515
Nkomo, 283
Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), 104, 284, 285, 289, 379, 412, 473, 602
Noorani, Justice, 444
North–South Dialogues, 206, 212, 220, 259, 354, 359, 377, 379, 605
Nurul Hasan, 267, 336, 350
Nyerere, Julius, 103, 244, 291, 293, 316

Ocean festival, 69
Old Boy's Association, Aligarh, 124
Omar Khayyam, 187
Operation Black Thunder, 171
Orissa, 317
Orissa Legislature, 336
Oxford English Dictionary, 366

P.V.S.M., 153
Padma Shri, 122
Padma Awards, 148, 476
Padmanabha, 344, 464, 477
Padmavibhushan, 344, 477
Pahadia, Jagannath, 154
Pakistan, 47, 63, 166, 177, 181, 182, 187, 196, 206, 228, 263, 304, 355, 369, 387, 398, 450, 573
Pakistani infilitration, 439
Palacio de Quelus, 356
Palestine Liberation Organisation (P.L.O.), 36, 268
Palestinian issue, 307
Palestinian people, 352
Pandian, Ratnavel, 197
Panigrahi, Chintamani, 144
Pant, Govind Vallabh, 127
Pant, K.C., 81, 82, 106, 280
Paphos, 219
Parasaran, K., 146, 197, 485
Parkinson, Northcote, 20
Parliamentarians for Global action against Apartheid, 49
Paswan, Ramvilas, 171, 228, 403, 404
Patanjali Sastri, 197
Patel, Vallabhbhai, 425, 600
Pathak, Gopal Swaroop, 380, 381
Pathak, R.S., 16, 197, 252, 380
Patil, Pratibha, 17
Patil, Shivraj, 479, 561, 562, 600, 650
Patil, Vasant Rao, 95
Patil, Veerendra, 415, 418, 419, 467
Patnaik, Biju, 274, 392, 436, 487, 488
Patricia, Countess, 96
Pattukottai, 156
Paunar Asharm, 150
Pawar, Sharad, 152, 329, 551, 554, 556
Pennar, 156
Perestroika, 174, 176, 178, 189, 370
Peri Sastri, 312
Persia, 115
Peter Brooks, 258
Petrovorodsky, 415
Petrodverets, 186
Philippines, 39
Philip, 96
Philips, Hood, 314
Pilot, Rajesh, 83
Piskarobskoya memorial, 185
Planning Commission, 386

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Pondicherry, 281
Pondicherry University, 75, 76, 281
Portugal, 353, 355, 356, 358, 359, 360, 362, 376, 605
—— Portuguese government, 362
Postal Bill, 42, 84
Post Office Amendment Bill, 335
Prabhakaran, 27, 28, 148
Pravda, 185
Premadasa, 29, 56, 298
Prem Kumar, 91, 125, 175, 204, 258, 274, 282
President of Cyprus, 54, 450
President's Bodyguard, 14, 15, 17, 31, 235
President's rule in Harayana, 386, 497
President's rule in Karnataka, 273, 298, 420, 421, 467
President's rule in Mizoram, 203
President's rule in Nagaland, 194
President's rule in Punjab, 141, 142, 144
President's rule in Tamil Nadu, 172, 466, 467
Pretoria regime, 366
Prevention of Corruption Act, 277, 278
Prince of Wales, 363, 364, 374, 607
Prince Philip, 364, 375, 376
Princess Diana, 363, 607, 608
Princess Margaret, 204, 374
'Prithvi', 196
Priyanka *see* Gandhi, Priyanka
Public Account's Committee, 297
Public Services Commission, 444
Punjab, 2, 108, 141, 142, 143, 144, 149, 164, 177, 182, 207, 228, 313, 350, 369, 386, 387, 388, 397, 408, 409, 416, 464, 472, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 612
Punjab Constitution Amendment Bill, 490
Queen Abbakka, 416
Queen Elizabeth, 364
Queen of Netherlands, 448
Quit India Movement, 1, 198
Quit India Resolution, 40

R.K. Karanjia, Felicitation Committee, 152
Rachiah, 165, 350
Radhakrishnan, S., 3, 8, 16, 22, 110, 169, 201, 202, 372, 554
Rahul *see also under* Gandhi, Rahul,
Rajagopalachari, C., 19, 72, 108, 109, 171
Rajaji Hall, 126
Rajamadam village, 1, 156
Rajamannar, 197
Rajaram, K., 136, 137
Raja Ramanna, 75, 433
Rajasthan High Court, 108
Rajasthan Sati Prevention Bill, 108
Rajendra Prasad, 8, 16, 21, 110, 111, 124, 128, 151, 165, 166, 170, 202, 300, 477, 507
Rajghat, 2, 12, 47, 48, 79
Rajiv-Jayawardane agreement, 94
Rajiv-Longowal agreement, 141
Rajya Sabha, 11, 15, 16, 50, 80, 96, 97, 110, 111, 152, 153, 200, 202, 383, 417, 484, 490, 492, 497
Raksha Bandhan, 41, 399
Ram, N., 200, 201
Ramachandran, D., 454
Ramachandran, M.G., 27, 28, 33, 34, 38, 125, 126, 133, 148, 149, 463
Ramachandran, Janaki, 127, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 148, 300
Ramagundam, 306
Raman, C.V., 127
Ramanathan, 2, 25
Ramanujan, 127
Rama Rao, N.T., 5, 72, 96, 98, 127, 198, 241, 274, 300
Ramaswami, V., 393, 483
Ramaswami, G., 458, 485, 497

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Ramaswami Mualiar, A., 198
Ramayana, 187
Ramdas, Admiral, 153, 453, 454, 467
Ram Janma Bhoomi, 397, 399, 536
Ram Janma Bhoomi-Babri Masjid complex, 429
Ramphal, Sridath, 367
Ranga, N.C., 106, 330
Ranganathan, 115, 253
Ranjani, 190
Rath Yatra, 426, 427, 439
Rau, Heinrich, 105
Rau, Johann, 105
Ravi Shankar, 34, 180, 374, 375
Ray, Rabi, 330, 399, 456, 482, 546, 562
Ray, S.S., 388
Ray, Satyajit, 4, 258
Rayalaseema, 198
Red Cross, 96, 112
Reddi, Brahmanand, 140, 329, 338
Reddi, M. Chenna, 300
Reddi, Madhav, 195
Reddy, Sanjeeva, 88, 141, 192, 315, 535, 641
Reddi, Satyanarayan, 350, 470
Reddy, Jaipal, 403, 496
Reishang Keishing, 70
Regional Engineering College, Tiruchi, 301
Rene, Albert, 311, 312, 412
Republic Day, 43, 106, 604
Republic Day address, 194, 256, 345, 461
Republic Day broadcast, 131
Republic Day celebrations, 131, 137, 512
Republic Day ceremonies, 130
Republic Day festivities, 344
Republic Day parade, 130, 131, 256, 605
Research and Analysis Wing, 382, 463, 464
Riga, 75
Rig Veda, 184
Rodrigues, 153
Roerich, Svetoslav, 102
Rohtang Pass, 167, 168
Ronnie de Mel, 60, 61
Rourkela, 306
Roy, *Admiral*, 74
Roy, Renuka, 106
Rubia Syeed, 329, 332, 350
Rukmini Arundale, 160
Romania, President of, 448
Ryzhkov, 104

SAARC, 94, 340
SAARC summit, 450
Sabarmati, 154, 160
Safdarjung airport, 100
Sahi, Krishna, 113
Sahi, L.P., 175
Saikia, Hitendra, 202
Sait, Ibrahim Sulaiman, 486
Sakuntalam, 184, 211
Salazar, 357
Salem, 99
Salt Satyagrah, 155
Salve, N.K.P., 152, 195
Samarkand, 187, 188
Sankara Jayanti, 101
Sankaracharya of Kanchi, 155
Sankaracharya of Puri, 171
Sanskrit-Russian Dictionary, 187
Santiniketan, 160
Sapru, Tej Bahadur, 381
Saprus, 78
Sarkaria Commission, 157
Sarkaria Commission Report, 88
Sasangir, 154
Sathe, Vasant, 488
Satyamurti, S., 127, 197, 198
Sawai Man Singh, 188
Saxena, Girish, 382, 383
Schloss Gynmick, 302
School of Sculpture, Mahabalipuram, 124
Scindia, Madhav Rao, 68, 302, 309

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

SDR Loan, 92
Sen, Mohit, 152
Serengeti Wildlife Park, 293
Seshan, T.N., 497, 498, 502, 544, 545
Sewagram, 150
Seychelles, 311, 312, 343, 412
Shabana Azmi, 149
Shah, Manubhai, 68
Shah Commission, 118
Shakti Sthala, 89, 102
Shankaracharya Hill, 78
Shankara Deva festival, 107
Shankaranand, 4, 197
Shanti Bhushan, 277, 279, 280
"Shanti Mantra", 180
'Shanti Niketan', 52
Shanti Path, 183
Shantivana, 100
Sharad Prasad, H.Y., 34, 648, 649
Sharma, Shankar Dayal, 43, 48, 50, 70, 80, 96, 97, 111, 152, 153, 281, 432, 570, 606, 607
Sharma, Vimala, 111
Sharma, Yagya Dutt, 350
Shastri, Lal Bahadur, 79, 148, 187
Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, 78
Shiv Shankar, 200
Shobha, 2, 3
Shukla, V.C., 123, 455, 459, 473, 486, 592
Siachin area, 63
Siberia, 189
Sikkim, 123, 314
Simla, 165, 166, 168, 341, 382, 383, 387, 462
Simla Agreement, 369, 398
Singh, Ajit, 328, 385, 435
Singh, Arjun, 551, 569
Singh, Bhishma Narayan, 63, 470
Singh, Dinesh, 100, 101, 139, 400
Singh, Durbar, 195
Singh, Govind Narayan, 140
Singh, Karan, Dr., 101
Singh, L.P., 314, 412
Singh, S.K., 196, 340, 341, 342
Singh, Siddharth, 282
Singh, V.P., 2, 66, 67, 128, 323, 324, 325, 326, 330, 331, 332, 335, 339, 341, 342, 344, 375, 383, 386, 388, 389, 390, 391, 394, 397, 398, 399, 405, 407, 408, 409, 412, 413, 414, 420, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 435, 436, 437, 440, 442, 445, 453, 456, 458, 459, 464, 467, 504, 532, 533, 562
Singh, Veer Bahadur, 35
Singh, Veer Bhadra, 165
Singhvi, Dr., 485
Sinha, Ram Dulari, 139
Sinha, Srikrishna, 127
Sinha, Yashwant, 328, 382, 383, 474, 475, 486
Sino-Indian Border situation, 115
Siri Fort Auditorium, 105, 158
Sivasidambaram, 33, 94
Six Nation Five Continment Initiative, 104, 293
Sixth Plan, 308
Soares, President, 361
Social Democratic Party, 305, 359
Soli J. Sorabjee, 314, 318, 334, 337, 431
Somnath, 154, 425, 439
Sonal Mansingh, 34, 35, 108
South Africa, 49, 50, 284, 287, 288, 289, 290, 292, 293, 366, 367, 372, 377, 380, 422, 423, 424
South America, 600
South Asian Federation Games, 103
South Commission, 316
South South Cooperation, 312, 379
Soviet Festival Committee, 183
Soviet Festival in India, 104, 105, 106
Soviet Union, 42, 74, 75, 81, 82, 97, 104, 106, 119, 160, 174, 175, 176, 178, 179, 180, 185, 186, 190, 280, 283, 292, 340, 353, 371, 372, 508

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Soz, Saifuddin, 498
Special Marriages Bill, 98
Special Protection Group, 345, 346, 347
Sports Authority of India, 172
Srinagar, 77, 168, 329, 340, 381
Srinivasa Iyer, 344
Sri Lanka, 2, 23, 27, 28, 57, 58, 60, 79, 80, 87, 95, 103, 108, 121, 130, 131, 135, 148, 153, 192, 220, 235, 298, 304, 369, 377, 433, 465
Sri Lankan Parliament, 57
SSK Submarines, 5
St. Jame's Palace, 365, 368, 374
St. Petersburg, 186
State Bank of India, 355
Subba Rao, Venkata, 197
Subramania Iyer, S., 197
Subramaniam, C., 312, 350, 351, 388
Subramaniam, S., 411
Subramaniam Swamy, 457, 458, 497, 499, 500, 506, 529, 586
Subramanian, L., 179
Sudharani Raghupati, 34, 149
Supreme Court, 73, 97, 143, 144, 157, 158, 236, 237, 247, 248, 277, 278, 280, 327, 336, 389, 393, 406, 445, 446, 565, 590, 595, 600
Supreme Court Bar Association, 485
Suraj Kund, 410
Surjeet, Har Kishan Singh, 496
Swami Malai, 124
SWAPO, 288, 289, 292
Swarajya, 145
Swarup Singh, Dr., 350, 351
Swedish Radio, 5, 80
Syed Ahmad Khan, Sir, 93, 94
Syed Mohammed, 66

Tabone, Censur, 376, 377, 602
Tadashi Kuranari, 41
Tagore, Rabindranath, 160, 184
Tahiliani, Admiral, 58, 59, 105, 116, 351, 453
Taj Mahal, 187
Tambo, Oliver, 289, 290
Tamil Nadu, 2, 46, 48, 65, 100, 108, 124, 125, 126, 127, 134, 136, 138, 139, 148, 155, 160, 161, 172, 258, 273, 416, 432, 462, 465, 466, 475, 481, 569, 586, 587, 592, 593, 642
Tamil Nadu Congress Committee, 80, 465, 538, 566
Tamil Nadu Government, 99, 111, 465, 565
Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), 33, 94
Tandon, Purushottam Das, 477
Tanganyika, 291, 293
Tanzania, 103, 282, 283, 291, 292, 293
Tashkent, 187, 189, 192
Tata, J.R.D., 40, 127, 601, 602, 608
Tatta Pani, 165, 166
Teacher's Day, 202
Tea Festival, 644
Teen Murti House, 94, 530, 531
Tek Chand, Dr., 73
Telugu Desam Party, 96, 98, 536
Tenth Lok Sabha, 546-560
Thanjavur, 155, 464
Thakkar Commission Report, 3
Thatcher, Margaret, 85, 368, 369, 370
Throne Room, 55
Tiananmen Square, 305, 309, 626
Tibet, 74, 191
Tibetan Refugees, 166, 167, 595, 596
Timothy, 96
The Times, London, 367
Tiwari, K.K., 152
Tolstoy, 180, 184
Tompok Singh, 69
Toynbee, Arnold, 281
Tripathi, Kamalapati, 8, 67, 69, 70, 346
Trivedi, R.K., 154

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

'Trishul', 196
'Tryst with Destiny', 44
Turkey, 195

UAE, 618
Uganda, 293
Ulan Bator, 189
ULFA, 464
Ulugbeg Observatory, Samarkand, 187, 188
UNICEF, 92
United Kingdom, 49, 50, 97, 353, 363, 367, 368, 370, 422, 452, 485, 611
United National Party, 57
United Nations, 36, 74, 99, 107, 175, 176, 181, 289, 377, 381, 611
United Nations Administrative Tribunal, 145, 280, 593, 594
United Nations Delegation, 122
United Nations General Assembly, 1, 39, 61, 99, 594
United Nations Tribunal, 309
Unnikrishnan, P., 414, 465, 489
United States, 10, 36, 38, 61, 127, 280, 288, 304, 471, 510, 512
——, Air Force, 471, 514
Upendra, P., 96, 97, 152, 153, 199, 465
Ustinov, 81, 117
Uttar Pradesh, 317, 416, 426, 497
Uzbek, 187
Uzbekistan, 189

Vaishnodevi, Jammu, 282
Vajpayee, Atal Behari, 152, 192, 195, 324, 427, 428, 432, 486, 533
Valsamma, 317
Vamuzo, 194
Vancouver Commonwealth Summit, 84, 85
Vande Mataram, 48
Varadachariar, S., 197
Varadan, S., 17, 22, 91
Vasco da Gama, 354, 356, 357, 358, 362
Vashist bath, 167
Vassiliou, George, 216, 217, 220, 271
Vatsyayan, Kapila, 34
Veerappan, R.M., 133
Velayati, Dr., 115
Vellore, 197
Venkatarama Iyer, T.L., 197
Venkataraman, K., 23
Venkatasubbiah, P., 140, 420
Venkatasubramanian, K., 281
Venkitaramanan, S., 76, 547
Venugopal, K.K., 431, 444, 485
Vepa Ramesam, 197
Verma, Mahadevi, 149
Verma, Virendra, 388
Viceregal lodge, Simla, 164, 169
Victoria Falls, 285, 416
Vigyan Bhavan, 123, 124, 154, 172, 352
Visweswarya, 415, 564
Vijay Chowk, 132
Villa Hammerschmidt, 303
Virk, Sandip Singh, 149
Vishwa Hindu Parishad, 315, 425, 429
Vo Chi Cong, 507, 508, 510
Vora, Motilal, 35, 112, 113, 114, 115, 139, 453
Vorontsov, Yuri, 82

War Memorial, 166
Wali Khan, 45, 46, 48, 476
Washington, 122
Weisbaden, 309
Weizsäcker, 303, 304, 305, 306, 308, 467, 468, 469
Wellingdon Crescent, 648
West Bengal, 172
Westminster Abbey, 365, 461
Wild Goose Pagoda, 632
World Bank, 510
World Federation of Young Theosophists, 160

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

World War II, 179, 185, 299, 303, 365, 411, 530

Yadav, Laloo Prasad, 502
Yadav, Mulayam Singh, 426, 429
Yadav, Sharad, 403, 404
Yadav, Shyamlal, 140
Yakub Khan, 196
Yamini Krishnamurthy, 34
Yan Changye, 603, 619, 637
Yang Shang Kun, 620, 631, 632
Yan Zhong Yi, 633
Yasser Arafat, 36, 37, 352
Yehudi Menuhin, 374
Youngusband, Francis, 77
Yunus Saleem, 469, 470

Zail Singh, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 25, 30, 84, 91, 123, 129, 171, 649
Zakir Husain, 8, 16, 21, 471
Zambia, 282, 287, 289, 290, 291
Zanu, 284
Zhou En Lai, 543, 595, 621, 628
Zhou Lin, 631
Zhoupu, 638
Zhu Lin, 596
Zanzibar, 291
Zapu, 283
Zia-ul-Haq, 47, 63, 195, 196
Zimbabwe, 195, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 293, 416
Zulfikar Bhutto, 477

Gandhi Memorial College
SRINAGAR
Acc. No: 2380
Dated: 1.9.04

G.M.C.E.J
2381

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education, Jantalab, Jammu

RAMASWAMI VENKATARAMAN was born on December 4, 1910 in Rajamadam village in Tamil Nadu. After a distinguished academic career, he was enrolled as an advocate of the Madras High Court and later of the Supreme Court of India. He was one of the panel of lawyers deputed by the Government of India in 1946 to defend Indian nationals in Malaya and Singapore charged with the offence of collaboration with the Japanese during World War II. He specialized in Industrial Relations Law and founded and edited the *Labour Law Journal*, Madras.

After release from detention in jail for participating in the *Quit India* Movement, he entered Parliament in 1950. Later he successively became Minister of Industries, Labour, Power, etc., in the then State of Madras from 1957-67. He is remembered even today as the Father of Industrialisation of Tamil Nadu.

He re-entered Parliament and became Minister of Finance and then Minister of Defence, Vice-President of India and President of India. His tenure as President of India between 1987-92 was marked by a series of political crises leading to the appointment of three Prime Ministers in two years. His deep knowledge of Law and the Constitution enabled him to steer the country through the years of uncertainty and anxiety.

He was a member of the Indian delegation to the United Nations for well nigh a decade, President of the United Nations Administration Tribunal for over ten years and variously Governor of the IRBD, IMF, ADB, etc. He was also the leader of the Indian Delegation to ILO in 1958. Widely travelled, he has a deep interest in philosophy, religion, art and literature.

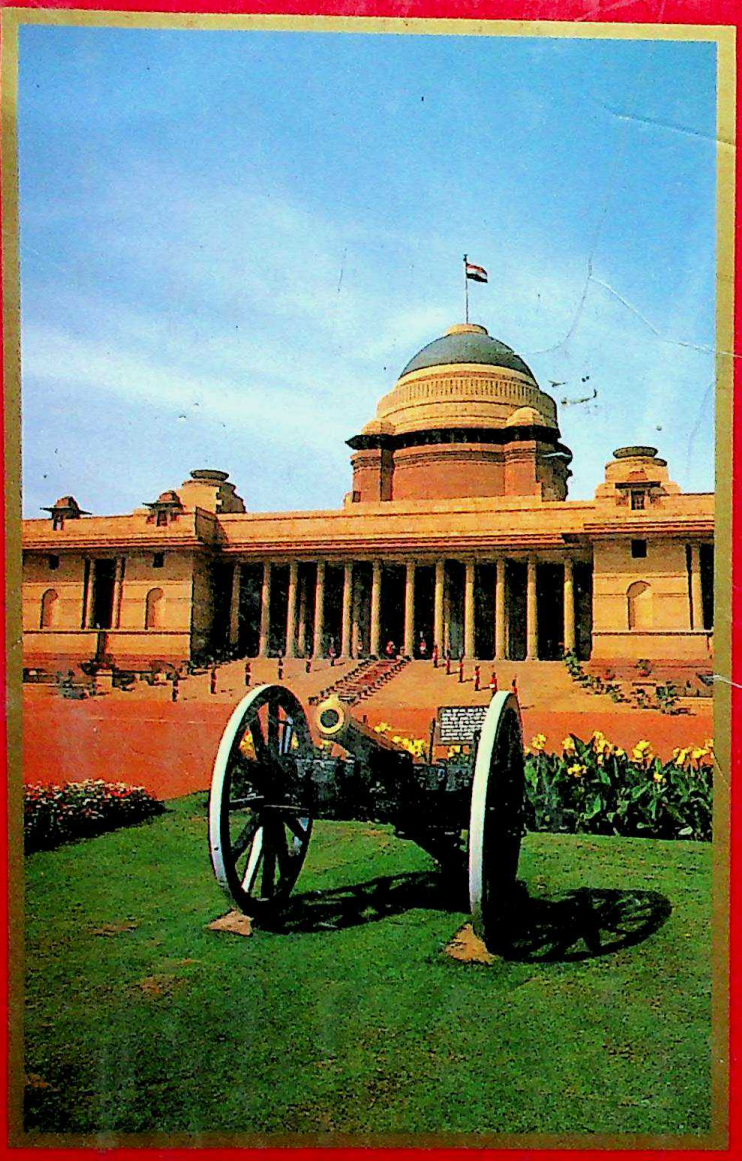
He is currently the Chairman of the Kalakshetra Foundation, Adyar, Madras.

Book Jacket Design by ARRT CREATIONS.
Book Jacket Photographs by T.S. Ashok,
Chief Photographer, Rashtrapati Bhavan.

CC-0. Mumukshu Bhawan Varanasi Collection. Digitized by eGangotri
CC-0. Jangamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

An imprint of **HarperCollins** *Publishers* **India**

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu



"The office of the President is like an emergency light. It comes on automatically when there is a crisis and goes off automatically when the crisis passes."

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh